

Representing Climate Change Space: Islographs of Tuvalu

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Abstract

Tuvalu, an archipelagic nation state in central Oceania, is being transformed by climate change, particularly sea level rise. Its islands are also being *represented* in new ways in climate change discourses such as journalism and environmentalist campaigns. This research in the interdisciplinary field of island studies also draws from insights in cultural geography and anthropology to examine representations of the Tuvalu islands in climate change discourses. The central idea underpinning the work's analytical framework is the islograph, taken to be coherent suites of island representations and their constitutive roles in relations of power. In a significant discursive moment in which climate change is being understood as *the* global environmental crisis, Tuvalu is taking on new meanings that demand documentation and critical analysis. Such meanings are tied to an extant and remarkably strong presence of islands in Western discourses. Analysis of Tuvalu's islographs - many of which are produced by Westerners engaged in climate change discourses - considers whether and how its islands are paradoxical spaces and mechanisms of relational identity construction that function as mirrors of the self and a means of identity construction in relation to distant and different others. Islographs of Tuvalu that are analysed in detail in this work include the following: Mark Lynas' popular science monograph *High Tide*, which aims to redefine Tuvalu as a frontier of climate change and a spur to action on climate change at the global level; various activities of environmentalist non-government organisation Alofa Tuvalu which try to reposition Tuvalu as the rightful space in which global lessons for sustainable

living are to be learned; *Sydney Morning Herald* articles, where, as the islands disappear, Tuvaluans are transformed into environmental refugees and yet Western tourists are also urged to turn a voyeuristic eye towards the 'disappearing islands'; and interviews with participants in climate change discourses. I demonstrate that in such discourses Tuvalu's islographs are structured by a paradox: its islands constituted as separate from and yet embedded in global climate change trajectories; its inhabitants simultaneously identified as subjects of compassion and objects of voyeurism. Such a paradox is embodied in recurring images of Tuvalu as valuable yet expendable - the 'canary in the coalmine' of climate change for Earth. Meanwhile, among professionals in Tuvalu who are engaged in climate change debate - politicians, bureaucrats, community elders, educators, journalists, and pastors - attempts are being made to reclaim Tuvalu as inherently valuable space. Their islographs link Tuvalu to the rest of planet Earth - not in service to it as a litmus test, but connected to and embedded in common rights and responsibilities of humanity to advance environmental stewardship and cultural diversity.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

Carol Farbotko
9 November 2008

Statement of access

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Chapter 1: A map of this work

Introduction

This work is concerned with island representations. Commencing with the premise that island meanings are subject to ongoing contestation that warrant investigation given their powerful effects, **the aim is to examine representations of islands in climate change discourses.** I examine representations of Tuvalu specifically, locating the work in the interdisciplinary field of island studies and drawing on insights from cultural geography and anthropology. In a significant discursive moment in which climate change is being defined and grappled with around the world as *the* global environmental crisis, Tuvalu is taking on new meanings that demand documentation and critical analysis.

Tuvalu is a group of nine small, low lying islands which have been identified as sites of long term sea level rise related to climate change (Bindoff et al. 2007). Its atolls and reef islands¹ - Funafuti, Nanumea, Nanumaga, Niutao, Niulakita, Nui, Nukufetau, Nukulaelae and Vaitupu - lie between longitudes 5° and 11° south and latitudes 176° and 179° east (Figure 1). They are inhabited by some 10,000 people². This sovereign archipelago in the central

¹ An atoll is a peripheral ring-shaped coral reef surrounding a lagoon on a subsiding oceanic volcano. A reef island is characterised by a land area that covers large portions of an available reef platform, with small land-enclosed ponds (McLean and Hosking 1991).

² The *Tuvalu 2002 Population and Housing Census*, Tuvalu's most recent, recorded the enumerated population of Tuvalu on 17th November 2002 as 9,561 people (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2005a). This figure was a *de facto* count including all residents and visitors present on census night and excluding residents who were away from Tuvalu (even for a short period) at the time of the census.

Pacific has been scrutinised, debated on, and gazed at by a global audience in the context of climate change debates since the late 1980s; frequently and at times contentiously referred to as ‘sinking islands’ or ‘disappearing islands’³.

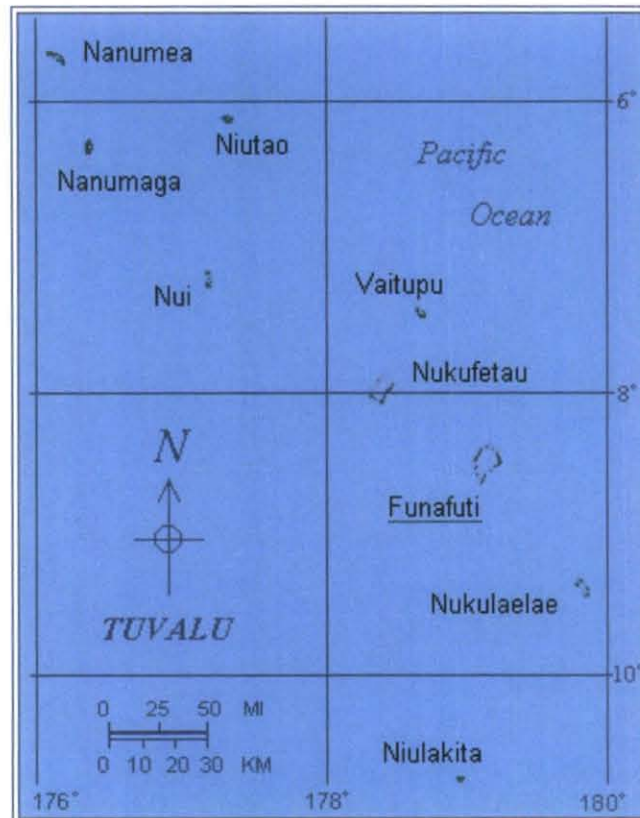


Figure 1: Map of Tuvalu
(Source: TuvaluIslands.com nd, np)

To the extent that there can be said to exist a collective popular viewpoint of Tuvalu in the West and/or the post-industrial world⁴, Tuvalu has undergone dramatic changes in representation. From 1841 until independence in 1978,

³ For example, titles of published accounts of Tuvalu in climate change discourses include: *A 21st-century Atlantis in the Sinking* (Kurosawa 2001); *Is Tuvalu Really Sinking?* (Baliunas and Soon 2002); *That Sinking Feeling* (Ede 2003); *All the disappearing islands: as the ice caps melt and oceans rise, will Tuvalu become a modern Atlantis?* (Whitty 2003); *Will Tuvalu Disappear Beneath the Sea? Global warming threatens to swamp a small island nation* (Allen 2004) and *Climate Science: A Sinking Feeling* (Patel 2006).

⁴ I focus on Western representations of islands in this work, and engagements with them among Tuvaluans, while acknowledging that there are also many non-Western and hybrid discourses of ‘islands’, that ‘Western’ and ‘post-industrial’ discourses on climate change are pluralistic and contested, and that conceptualizing coherent ‘Western’ or ‘post-industrial’ worlds is problematic. For Western researchers, ‘the way we position ourselves in relation to the West, the way we embrace it or refuse it, provides one of the most complex and pressing of modern dilemmas’ (Bonnett 2000, 349).

Tuvalu was known as the Ellice Islands⁵. It was a portion of Britain's imperial project. Following independence, the Ellice Islands were renamed Tuvalu. In just over a decade, Tuvalu and other low lying coastal areas around the world were identified as being at significant risk from rising sea levels (Connell and Roy 1990; Lewis 1989). Such identification has paralleled the wider emergence of climate change as a major international environmental issue, and an associated debate over whether and how to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere from fossil fuel use. The possible disappearance of a string of islands - and an entire nation state at that - generated a great deal of international popular, scholarly and policy interest (for example Allen 2004; Baliunas and Soon 2002; Chambers and Chambers 2007; Connell 2003b; Dickinson 1999; Eschenbach 2004a; 2004b; Farbotko 2005a; Hunter 2002; 2004; Knox 2002; Price 2002; Sem et al. 1996; Sheehan 2002; Whitty 2003; Yamano et al. 2007). Tuvaluan leaders vigorously publicised the need for action on climate change impacts in international and domestic arenas, and incorporated climate change issues into policy-making (Government of Tuvalu 1992; Paeniu 1991; 1997; Sopoaga 2005; Sopoanga 2003; TANGO 2005; Toafa 2004)⁶. By early in the new millennium, many Western journalists were filing stories on Tuvalu and climate change (for example Knox 2002; Levine 2002; Sheehan 2002). According to Chambers and Chambers (2007), five documentaries on Tuvalu and climate change appeared between 2001 and 2006. None of them was made by Tuvaluans. Tuvalu has also been marketed in the West, by Westerners, as a site for climate change tourism (Balmain 2006; Iaccarino 2006). By June 2007, Google returned over

⁵ Throughout this work, I use the term 'Tuvalu' and not 'Ellice Islands', except where context demands reference to either 'Ellice Islands' or 'Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony'.

⁶ 'Sopoaga', a Tuvaluan name, is spelled in some sources in this work as 'Sopoanga'.

800,000 hits for a search in English on Tuvalu and climate change and/or global warming⁷. Tuvalu has emerged from relative obscurity as ‘an outpost of empire so classic that it approaches caricature’ (Woodcock 1972 cited in Connell 1980a, 107) and is often seen as a ‘poster child’ for climate change (Chambers and Chambers 2007, 294). Such a significant discursive shift deserves further interrogation. To such ends, this work is concerned with the role of island representations in climate change discourses, seeking to understand, specifically, a range of representational practices through which the Tuvalu islands are problematically becoming understood as a litmus test for climate change on a global scale.

Defining representations as configurations of words, images and symbols that organise meaning, Tuvalu’s transformation into a ‘poster child’ for climate change can be traced in sites of representation such as interviews, photographs, poems, newspaper and magazine articles, internet sites, films, books, speeches, postage stamps, research papers, personal musings, newsletters, children’s art, seminars, speeches, workshops and policy statements. Drawing on the work of Dryzek (1997), Fairclough (2001), Hajer (1995), Jørgenson and Phillips (2002) and Macnaghten (1993), I use the term *discourse* as meaning shared representations; understandings of the world that are actively and continually negotiated as part of its production. While a variety of concepts could usefully be problematised in analysis of representations of Tuvalu, **I hypothesise that focussing on ‘island’ specifically allows important geopolitical power relations in climate**

⁷ ‘Global warming’ and ‘climate change’ sometimes function as interchangeable terms in climate change discourses. I use the latter in this work.

change discourses to be understood. Examination of representations of Tuvalu in climate change discourses is operationalised in six parts in this work, each of which addresses a specific objective.

Objectives

The first objective is to introduce the *islograph*, the central concept in this work's analytical framework. Islographs are shared, non-static imaginings of islands, mediated through words, images and symbols. An islograph is a tool, its handiwork evident in configurations of island representations. I have found it useful to create and deploy this neologism to demonstrate the important role of island representations in climate change power relations. Although participants in climate change discourses have conflicting views on whether or not Tuvalu is disappearing, I will argue that there are common elements to the islographs they produce which stabilise and normalise particular meanings of Tuvalu.

The second objective is to describe the research design for this work. I outline the methods employed and reflect on research ethics. In particular, I document how my engagement with islographs is a practice necessarily situated and partial (see also Farbotko 2006a). This work is informed and complicated by my positioning in relation to constitutive outsides of the islands I have selected for analysis. 'Outsides' are constitutive because boundaries are not static lines but negotiated processes (Paasi 1999). That I am an Australian and not a Tuvaluan citizen, for instance, is an important consideration. Similarly, that I have no kinship ties with inhabitants of Tuvalu. These 'boundaries' of

Tuvalu are islographic as well as being legal, political, social and cultural, their continued reproduction and effects shaping and possibly being shaped by the way I approach, access, claim and am offered representations of the Tuvalu islands. Thus, Tuvalu and my analyses and interpretations of it are mutually constituted, and it is important to describe ethical obligations surrounding my identification of, selection of, access to, and interpretation of representations of Tuvalu.

The third objective of this work is to describe and critically review scholarly literature on islands and island representations. While Tuvalu is taking on new meanings in discourses of climate change, such meanings are tied to an extant and remarkably strong presence of islands in Western discourses. Thus I review island scholarship that investigates and comments on this presence. From this review, two key characteristics of Western islographs are drawn out. First, islands are represented as paradoxical, yet paradoxes are not necessarily self-evident. Most frequently, only one side of the paradox is clearly visible. For example, islands are often characterised as *fundamentally* isolated. Islands are also characterised as being different in meaning from mainlands and/or continents. But, the island is bounded, insular and separate only in relation to its connections to other islands and/or continents (Baldacchino 2004a). As notions of the insular island are interrogated, the coexistence of the dialectical opposite of the paradox, connections to the constitutive outside - that which is *not*-island - become more visible

(cf. Larson 2004)⁸. Second and relatedly, islands are imaginative geographies (Said 1978) - mechanisms of relational identity construction. Again paradoxically, they can function as mirrors of the self and a means of identity construction in relation to distant and different others. Critical island scholarship, and geographic scholarship extending and critiquing Said's ideas on Orientalism, provide useful conceptual mechanisms for investigating islands as paradoxes and imaginative geographies. Using such insights, my subsequent analysis of Tuvalu's islographs - many of which are produced by Westerners in climate change discourses - considers whether and how its islands are represented as paradoxical and function as imaginative geographies.

The fourth objective is to provide an overview of key points in the history of Tuvalu, formerly part of the British Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony and now a sovereign state. This task is important for contextualising later analyses of Tuvalu's islographs in climate change discourses and understanding the significance of its changing island meanings.

With these foundations in place, the fifth objective is to describe and analyse islographs of Tuvalu in climate change discourses. I analyse a selection of representations of Tuvalu produced by a range of individuals and groups⁹.

⁸ Larson's (2004) analysis of the road in American literature as a paradoxical space of freedom and liberation, homogenization and containment, has informed this analysis of islands as paradoxical space.

⁹ Given the proliferation of representations of Tuvalu produced by Westerners, this study could adopt a 'nissographic' analytical framework (McCall 2006). A nissograph is defined as an outsider's representations of islands *to* outsiders, seemingly assuming a fixed constitutive outside. My islograph concept, as will be explained in this chapter, is more expansive and arguably more useful. The nissographic approach may problematically sidestep important issues of discursive hybridity and contestation in which an island's constitutive outside is

Islographs of Tuvalu that are analysed in detail include the following. First, there is Mark Lynas' popular science narrative *High Tide* (Lynas 2004b), which aims to redefine Tuvalu as a frontier of climate change and a spur to action on climate change at the global level. Second, I examine various activities of environmental non-government organisation Alofa Tuvalu which try to reposition Tuvalu as the rightful place in which global lessons for sustainable living are to be learned. Third, I interrogate *Sydney Morning Herald* news reports, where, as the islands disappear, Tuvaluans are transformed into environmental refugees and Western tourists are urged to turn a voyeuristic eye towards the sinking islands (see also Farbotko 2005a; 2007b). By examining these and other competing, supporting and ambiguous islographs, I seek to demonstrate that in such discourses, Tuvalu's islographs are structured by a paradox: its islands constituted as separate from and yet embedded in global climate change trajectories; its inhabitants simultaneously identified as subjects of compassion and objects of voyeurism. Such a paradox is embodied in recurring images of Tuvalu as valuable yet expendable - the 'canary in the coalmine' of climate change for Earth.

The sixth objective of this work is to consider negotiations of such islographs among some of Tuvalu's inhabitants who participate in climate change discourses. Many of these resist islographs that position Tuvalu's islands as a global climate change litmus test. Drawing on published sources and semi-structured interviews with inhabitants of Tuvalu who are professionally engaged in climate change discourses - politicians, bureaucrats, educators,

continually negotiated. The islograph, unlike the nissograph, is not limited to representations by or for outsiders.

community elders, students, non-government sector workers and volunteers, and pastors - I show how attempts are being made to reclaim Tuvalu as inherently valuable. These islographs link Tuvalu to the rest of planet Earth not in service to it as a litmus test, but connected to and embedded in common rights and responsibilities of humanity to advance environmental stewardship and cultural diversity.

Research significance

The significance of this work is at least twofold. First, it contributes to critical cultural geographies of climate change.¹⁰ Second, it introduces and demonstrates the analytical utility of islographs to island studies. These are elaborated in turn.

Debate over impacts of climate change on social, ecological and physical systems is a rich arena for speculation and imagination (Brönnimann 2002) and depend in part on 'what we imagine it would be like to dwell in these places' (Sack 1997, 238). Yet, little geographic research has been carried out on representations of climate change (cf. Lovbrand and Stripple 2006). Furthermore, scholars interested in islands have not examined climate change discourses in any detail; as this work demonstrates, however, it is important to do so. The potential of climate change to radically reshape island space - materially, in lived experiences and in representation - lends urgency to the project of understanding how such reshaping is taking place:

¹⁰ An important limitation of this work is its lack of attention to temporal aspects of climate change discourse, which are beyond the scope of a largely spatial study.

Owing to their high vulnerability and low adaptive capacity, small islands [sic] have legitimate concerns about their future, based on observational records, experience with current patterns and consequences of climate variability, and climate model projections. Although emitting less than 1% of global greenhouse gases, many small islands have already perceived a need to reallocate scarce resources away from economic development and poverty alleviation, and towards the implementation of strategies to adapt to the growing threats posed by global warming (Mimura et al. 2007, 690).

For many inhabitants of the Tuvalu islands, understanding sea level rise is partly a matter of personal experience. For climate scientists, climate change is concerned with physical changes in the earth's systems, knowable through complex and specialised measurements and simulations (for example see Hunter 2002). However, for many others around the world, it is largely representational arenas such as newspapers, magazines and the Internet that provide ways of understanding climate change in Tuvalu.¹¹

I focus on representations, rather than material changes in the Tuvalu islands or lived experiences of rising sea levels, for a particular reason: existing debate over the physicality of rising sea levels, and what effects these and other climate change impacts may have on health, infrastructure, trade,

¹¹ In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991) argues that space is contingent and can be conceptualised as being produced in a mutually constituted synthesis of three moments: partly in materiality, partly in representation and partly in lived experience (Lefebvre 1991). These moments are 'fluid and alive, and each moment messily blurs into other moments in ... real life contexts' (Merrifield 2000, 173). Thus, the production of Tuvalu as climate change space can be considered to have three mutually constitutive aspects. First, there are the nine atolls and reef islands as physical entities and the Pacific Ocean where they are located: rocks, sand, coral, beaches, cliffs, water, waves and tides. Second, there are lived experiences of land and water among Tuvalu's inhabitants: individual and shared interactions of people with territory. Examples include flooding of roads and houses during high tides, and salt-water infiltration into pulaka pits. Third, there are representations of Tuvalu in climate change discourses. The focus of this dissertation is representations of Tuvalu - the third aspect of Lefebvre's model of space, although reference is necessarily made to the first two aspects throughout.

ecology, agriculture and everyday life are necessary but insufficient for coming to terms with climate change. As will be demonstrated in this work, significant new representations of Tuvalu are being circulated in climate change discourses. The study of representations is a useful critical approach to understanding the world, arguably justified when new discourses take their place in public debate. Indeed, the study of representations should not be abandoned on the grounds of lacking academic novelty (Castree and Macmillan 2004). I contend that important representational thresholds (as well as material and experienced changes) are at stake for inhabitants of low lying islands. It is in the realm of representations that responses to climate change and sea level rise are normalised and expectations of future social change are moulded:

Climate change puts the long-term sustainability of societies in atoll nations at risk ... This danger is as much associated with the narrowing of adaptation options and the *role of expectations* of impacts of climate change as it is with uncertain potential climate-driven physical impacts. The challenges for research are to identify the thresholds of change beyond which atoll socio-ecological systems collapse and to assess how likely these thresholds are to be breached. *These thresholds may originate from social as well as environmental processes* (Barnett and Adger 2003, 333, emphases added).

McNamara (2006) provides an important example of how the role of climate change expectations can contribute to instability in island societies. Tuvaluans and other inhabitants of low lying island states are frequently referred to as existing or potential environmental refugees in climate change discourses. However, at present there is no institutionalised policy on environmental

refugees in the United Nations and, as such, anyone represented as an 'environmental refugee' is afforded no legal recognition. McNamara's study of perceptions of 'environmental refugees' among Small Island Developing State (SIDS) Ambassadors to the United Nations describes the power of the term 'environmental refugee' thus:

SIDS ambassadors ... resisted being constructed as 'environmental refugees', and in turn opposed ... being governed in the short term as 'environmental refugees' through multilateral policy. Acceptance of the possibility of 'environmental refugees' from climate change might be interpreted as appropriate because it responds to a potential future problem, but it also leaves open the option that major industrial powers continue to engage in unsustainable practices, knowing that a 'solution' would be forthcoming at the multilateral level to the issue of subsequent displacements. SIDS could find themselves in a situation where guarantees of protection for 'environmental refugees' ... means that their citizens do indeed become 'environmental refugees', their populations become unstable and their sovereignty is challenged - because knowledge of such protection would lessen the demand on industrialised nations to curb CO₂ emissions (McNamara 2006, 248).

The term 'island' also plays a powerful role in climate change discourses, as I will demonstrate. To be clear, it is beyond the scope and intention of this work to evaluate conflicting claims on the physical 'truth' of sea level rise in Tuvalu, or to document the climate change experiences of its inhabitants, although such projects are undoubtedly important. Rather, using the islograph my focus is on analysis of representations of Tuvalu that are mobilised in making claims about sea level rise and on interrogating the contexts in which those claims are made. Such tasks are of particular importance because for

many 'Tuvalu is unknown through direct experience and is created in the imagination through appeals to mediated representations' (Farbotko 2005a, 283). Since participants in climate change discourse have a choice of ways in which to represent islands, understanding how power relations and island representations are mutually constituted can be important for island inhabitants, policy-makers, politicians, journalists and academics.

Islographs

Turning to my first objective, in this section I introduce the idea of the islograph. Representations of islands, like other representations, are neither static nor innocent. In Western discourses, an island has a stabilised meaning, generally considered to be a body of land, smaller than a continent, surrounded by water, or something resembling an island.¹² This characteristic is sometimes imagined to be shared with every other island and the people who live on them share an imagined designation as 'islanders'. The Macquarie Dictionary's definition is indicative of a stabilised island meaning, widely agreed upon and used as follows:

Island/ *noun* 1. A tract of land completely surrounded by water, and not large enough to be called a continent. 2. a clump of woodland in a prairie. 3. an isolated hill. 4. something resembling an island. 5. a platform in the middle of a street, at a crossing, for the safety of pedestrians. 6. *Physiology, Anatomy* an isolated portion of tissue or aggregation of cells. 7. *Nautical* the superstructure of a ship. - *verb* 8. to make into

¹² Beer (1990) explains that the English word island is a composite of two elements: 'isle' derived from a word for water and meant 'watery' or 'watered'. When 'land' is added, 'island' becomes a word in which water is intrinsic. Beer (1990, 271) claims that 'the two elements, earth and water, are set in play. An intimate, tactile and complete relationship is implied between them in this ordering of forces. The land is surrounded by water; the water fills the shores'.

an island. 9. to dot with islands. 10. to place on an island; isolate (Delbridge et al. 2003, 1003).

Yet island meanings are also negotiated, relational and change over time, because they are characterised by fluid, ongoing struggles between claims of inclusion and exclusion, and they depend on the interests of those engaged in them (Hache 1998). As Royle (2001, 6) points out, even the 'basic facts' of islands, 'where the islands are and how many there are of them' is an exercise that depends on how islands are defined. Decisions made on which islands are too big or too small to enter into an island catalogue become matters of debate (Royle 2001). Dommen (1980a; 1980b) and Royle (2001) have noted that there is a lack of scholarly agreement on which indicators - such as land area, population and size of economy - can and should constitute what an island is and what it is not. Australia and Greenland are land masses that exemplify some of this lack of agreement. At times known as 'the-world's-largest-island-the-world's-smallest-continent' (McMahon 2003, 190), of Australia some island scholars argue that it is not an island at all (Dommen 1980a; Royle 2001). This relational dilemma has been neatly put by Holm (2000, 3), who writes: 'an island is a tract of land, surrounded by water, but smaller than a continent. Then what is the size of a continent you ask?'

A similar relational puzzle has been pointed out in reflections on how Greenland is defined as either continent or island that demonstrate how the utility of islandness as an idea depends on particular groups of people and on geological configurations:

[L]et us consider Greenland, which has an area of over 2 million km². If it had a temperate climate, many more inhabitants would have settled there, and it might be regarded as a continent. Why should it be considered an island? The obvious answer is that its severe climate has kept population levels low and has made it very marginal not only in the world space economy, but also in the mental world of the people in possession of high technology. These are the very people who are more effective in studying and 'making' geography. Sharing the fate of all the weak, Greenland accordingly became an appendix of something else: a political appendix of Denmark, and an appendix of North America in conventional geography textbooks. A considerable measure of subjectivity cannot be disposed of. On the other hand, many geologists and geomorphologists, not so prone to be swayed by popular perceptions, do not hesitate to regard Greenland as a continent (Biagini 1999, 27).

In the foregoing extract, Biagini attempts to excavate subjectivity and inscribe an objectivist truth in Greenland's land mass. Defining Greenland as island or continent becomes a tension between an imperialist gaze on Greenland as a marginal economic space, and an objectivist gaze on Greenland as a geologically significant space. Researchers (and of course others) have particular interests at stake in representing Greenland or Australia as continent, an island, or island-continent.

Given the foregoing, it is not surprising that definitions of islands vary significantly. Royle (2001) points out that an island might be any landform ranging from a rock jutting out in the ocean on which a seabird lands, to the 2,175,600 square kilometres expanse of Greenland. In nineteenth century Scotland, a body of land surrounded by water was considered to be an island if it was inhabited and had sufficient grazing land for at least one sheep

(Royle 2001). For Vikings, an island was defined as a body of land of sufficient distance from a mainland that the water between them was navigable by a ship with its rudder in place (Hache 1998; Royle 2001). A more recent island definition can be found in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982):

Article 121: Regime of islands

1. An island is a naturally formed area of land, surrounded by water, which is above water at high tide.
2. Except as provided for in paragraph 3, the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf of an island are determined in accordance with the provisions of this Convention applicable to other land territory.
3. Rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf.

In sum, island meanings cannot be read off unproblematically from a landscape. Moreover, *what an island means and might become is subject to ongoing contestation*. Investigating how island meanings are stabilised at times and changed at other times is important – and particularly in order to understand how islands are implicated in relations of power. Any spatial meanings are negotiated, shared entanglements of culture and nature that are continually reinforced, reformulated and challenged in cultural geographies,¹³ processes that constitute space in particular ways (Barnes and Duncan 1992; Harrison et al. 2004). Representations of islands, therefore, reflect the power and interests of the individuals or groups associated with their production.

¹³ 'Cultural geography is about the diversity and plurality of life in all its variegated richness; about how the world, spaces and places are interpreted and used by people; and how those places then help to perpetuate culture' (Crang 1998, 3).

An example of how stabilised island meanings can become contested is found in an essay on the islands of the Pacific Ocean by Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa (1993). Titled 'Our sea of islands', this configuration of the geography of Oceania¹⁴ brings into focus belittling notions of island that underlie contemporary social science understandings of the region. Hau'ofa urges that critical attention be paid to discourses that characterise Oceania's islands as

much too small, too poorly endowed with natural resources, and too isolated from the centres of economic growth for their inhabitants ever to be able to rise above their present condition of dependence on ... wealthy nations (Hau'ofa 1993, 4).

Although superficially aimed at raising living standards and promoting self-determination, these types of understandings are disempowering and deterministic. They contribute to dependency and subordination for island dwellers. If one only pays attention to the lives of the ordinary people of Oceania, Hau'ofa argues, other meanings of island spaces can be revealed. He points out that the lives of Oceania's people, characterised by movement and migration, are informed by notions of the largeness of Oceania as a connected 'sea of islands' rather than by the smallness of discrete land masses. His essay is a prompt to analyse and recover marginalised island meanings and experiences. For example, islands are not necessarily conceived of as fixed in space by Micronesian navigators:

¹⁴ Hau'ofa prefers the term 'Oceania' to 'Pacific' to describe the region, a practice which I adopt in this work.

The European, at sea in a small vessel, tends to envisage his [sic] situation as one in which his craft moves towards, passes by, and then away from fixed islands. The islands are secure and he is in motion. But Galdwin describes how the Puluwat navigator, once on course, inverts the concept and in his navigational system considers the canoe to be stationary and the islands to move towards and past him (Ward and Webb (1973) cited in Waddell 1993, xxvii).

Contrast the 'sea of islands' with the constitution of islands as 'small bodies of land surrounded by sea': these are two different ways of representing islands and exemplify what I have found useful to name islographs.

Islographs encapsulate coherent suites of island representations and their constitutive roles in relations of power. Islographs are useful, but not unproblematic, attempts to translate physical, social and cultural worlds of islands and coherently stabilise island meanings in terms of particular sets of ideas and values. Islographs are formed over time in a complex and interconnected web of many different media or materials and practices. Patterns of islographs may be found across and within any discursive process. Islographs are multiple and overlapping. They can be as simple as a definition or as complex as an interdisciplinary field of academic inquiry such as island studies. Tuvalu's islographs can be found in, for example, economics, poetry and literature, visual arts, biogeography, anthropology, journalism, environmentalism, education, political science, cultural geography, bureaucracy, everyday conversations, tourism and international relations. The islographs of Tuvalu central to this work are a subset of a broader set of representations of the world, namely climate change discourses.

An example of an islograph of Tuvalu is useful for illustrative purposes. Among the earliest people to produce representations of Tuvalu in climate change discourses were scholars who had a standing interest in Tuvalu. One of these scholars, a geographer named John Connell, contributed to ideas about Tuvalu as disappearing islands in academia and popular media in Australia (Connell 1980a; 1986; 2003b; Connell and Roy 1990; Quiddington 1988). Consider the following extracts from two of Connell's accounts of Tuvalu *before* it was identified as being at risk from sea level rise associated with climate change:

Tuvalu ... presents in almost classic terms the problem of small nations. It has a small population, the majority of whom remain essentially within the subsistence food production sector. Its size, and extremely limited natural resources, severely constrain the range of policy options available to the country (Connell 1980a, 31).

All the evidence suggests that the serious development problems experienced in ... Tuvalu cannot adequately be met by internal policies, or regional cooperation, and that higher levels of aid will only marginally contribute to economic growth (as opposed to improved welfare) (Connell 1986, 70).

Connell's characterisation of Tuvalu presented the islands as poor in natural resources, and consequently offering few opportunities for development. For him, the very small islands were spaces of intrinsic scarcity, where a state of modernity can never be realised because they provide only for subsistence. This view parallels closely representations that Hau'ofa (1993) questions and seeks to change: of Oceanic populations as inherently, and even fatally, small

and economically weak. In thinking of islands as spaces fundamentally outside modernity, Connell is able to argue that dependence on aid connections outside is preordained.

When sea level rise was identified as a future risk for Tuvalu, conceptions of the islands as fundamentally impoverished dependants became the basis of their meaning as spaces of climate change in Connell's accounts. In a newspaper report titled *Scientists warn of islands' peril*, which appeared in 1988, Connell is cited as an expert source. His representation of Tuvalu is cited by the journalist, in terms of smallness and weakness:

Up to about 500,000 people living on small coral islands in the two oceans could be displaced if the predictions of a one-metre rise in sea level over the next 50 years prove correct.

Dr Connell said that half of those people may need to seek refuge in Australia as there were few other immigration outlets. These included the entire populations of Kiribati and Tuvalu, in the Pacific, with a [combined] population of about 70,000, and perhaps the Maldives in the Indian Ocean - a string of hundreds of tiny islands with a total population of about 200,000. "Even without the greenhouse effect their problems are severe," said Dr Connell. "These people are already potential economic refugees and perhaps Australia will soon be forced to make concessionary migrations for these islanders. *There is absolutely no prospect of stopping the destruction of these small atoll States*" (Quiddington 1988, 7, emphasis added).

In this extract, Tuvalu is constituted in opposition to perceptions of Australia as a place of economic and environmental safety. Tuvaluans, represented as refugees, are assumed to be likely to try and find shelter there. The islands

continue to be represented as separate from spaces of modernity. Indeed, read in conjunction with his early representations of the islands, Connell finds the rising sea levels an exacerbation of existing dire conditions. Because Connell perceives the islands as already almost uninhabitable due to economic problems, the rising sea levels merely hasten a preordained fate for the people. Connell imagines a certain inevitability in them making an exit towards spaces of modernity, such as Australia.

Research design

The second objective of this work, on which I elaborate in this section, is to detail and justify my research design. Islographic research is chiefly qualitative, being concerned with understanding complexity and detail in the world through interactive and iterative methods of investigation and interpretation. In qualitative approaches to research, data generation is conducted strategically, systematically and rigorously but also flexibly and with attention paid to contextual issues (Mason 2002). Furthermore, analysing representations of islands - engaging with islographs - is necessarily a situated and partial practice. In this work, such a practice is informed and complicated by my own shifting positioning in relation to Tuvalu's shifting constitutive outsides. How I approach, access, claim and am offered data, and how I interpret and analyse information, will be shaped by my own identity and characteristics as a researcher. A researcher's particularities are not necessarily 'contaminants' to valid knowledge, a point argued by feminist scholars who question whether detachment from the research process is either

desirable or possible (Butler 2005; Haraway 1991; Plumwood 1993; Rose 1993; 1997). A researcher should, however, be reflexive. She needs to acknowledge and critically reflect on how her own identity and characteristics impact upon her research agenda, practices and outcomes (Butler 2005; Haraway 1991; Rose 1997). Thus it is important that I describe how I identified, selected and accessed representations of Tuvalu, making explicit the ethical obligations involved in this undertaking.

Reflexive self-monitoring, itself a necessarily partial and situated undertaking, is a practice that enhances knowledge production. Things researchers critique, such as islographs, do not occur unproblematically and passively. Rather, research agendas, practices and outcomes are enmeshed in the world and can reproduce its problematic power relations. Research is, for example, in part an attempt to advance personal purposes of researchers. Such purposes may be the satiation of curiosity, the construction of one's identity, and the advancement of an academic career. Self-monitoring makes more open to scrutiny the ways in which researchers are active participants - not detached observers - in the shaping of research and the wider world. This approach complements scholarship advocating the decolonisation of research; promoting critical engagement with ways in which Western knowledges about non-Western subjects might be complicit in new, subjugating, colonising forces (Gregory 1995; 2003; Howitt and Stevens 2005; Said 1978; Tuhiwai Smith 2005). Such critical engagement is particularly important for research in and of Oceania, a region in which old and new forms of colonisation are to be found in the arenas of academia and education (Clifford 2001; Diaz and

Kauanui 2001; Firth 2003; Gegeo 2001; Hau'ofa 1993; Hereniko 2001; Hviding 2003; Jolly 2001; Mishra 1993; Nabobo-Baba 2006; Subramani 1993; Teaiwa 2001; Thaman 2003; White and Tengan 2001; Wood 2003b).

Although advocates of reflexivity commonly stress the importance of self-monitoring for how characteristics such as gender, class, ethnic group, education, physical ability, age and sexual orientation impact on research, reflexivity should not be narrowly conceived as associated *only* with personal histories and bodily space. When researchers are contributing to the production of a particular space, such as a city or an island, by enrolling it as an object of critique, research output will be constituted in part by their contextual and shifting situatedness in relation to that space. Such situatedness needs to be accounted for reflexively (Driver 2000; Greenhough 2006; Massey 1999). Thus, rather than being detached from island representations, it is important to recognise that I am actively involved in their constitution by researching and writing about them: scholarly engagements with islographs are themselves islographs. If I self-monitor this work as a set of island representations in a thoughtful and ethically informed manner, my unavoidable personal commitments are less likely to reinforce inequitable power relations. My research may then more usefully demonstrate how islographs can be challenged and reformulated. Negotiating these issues is difficult. While 'recognition of the limits of an ethnocentric and usually self-congratulatory vantage-point' is useful, it 'cannot allow one totally to escape ethnocentrism' (Duncan 1993, 53-54). Thus, there may be islographs of climate change that are not documented in this thesis, precisely because of my

own cultural and linguistic specificities and limitations, including personal voyeuristic and compassionate interests in 'the disappearing islands'.

However, reflexive self-monitoring must be attempted in order to aid in 'the denaturalizing of the researcher's own categories and prepar[ing] the way for alternative histories' (Duncan 1993, 53-54).

Given that I am an Australian citizen, studying at an Australian university, and professionally situated in a Western critical academy, my investigation of Tuvalu's islographs is burdened with a neocolonial legacy: Tuvalu is a neighbouring nation state to Australia, both are former colonies of Britain, and the Australian Government is a donor to Tuvalu. My work draws on critical scholarship in, of and for Oceania to attempt to come to terms with this legacy (Nabobo-Baba 2006; Teaiwa 2001). My approach to achieving an ethically informed research agenda and practice is similar to that conceptualised as a 'cultural studies for Oceania' advocated by Wood (2003b). It relies on facilitating fruitful dialogues between and among different representations of Tuvalu. I hope to achieve an islographic hybridity: while considering what may be bluntly understood as Western islographs and responses to them among inhabitants of Tuvalu, I also highlight perspectives that unsettle boundaries between the two.

I take seriously the principle that 'non-Natives ... should no longer be allowed to claim for their disciplines, organisations, or corporations whatever resources they wish to take from the immense sea of Native knowledges scattered across Oceania' (Wood 2003b, 342). Simultaneously, I recognise

that Oceanic representations of islands need to be emphasised, precisely because they have been subjugated by colonial forces and because there remains a conceit that Western and possibly other epistemologies generate universally valid knowledge (Hau'ofa 1993; Nabobo-Baba 2006; Wood 2003b). It is important, therefore, that as a *palagi*¹⁵ researcher I take up the challenge to 'refer to [Oceanic] realities using Euro-American discourses while simultaneously undermining colonialist assumptions about the supposed universal applicability of those discourses' (Wood 2003b, 341).

Producing the field

Representations of Tuvalu form the data in this work, and the foregoing discussion informs how qualitative data collection methods are employed. Representations of Tuvalu in such data can be ethically made available to me only on the basis of informed mutual agreement between participants and myself. In this section, the chosen data collection methods of semi-structured interviews, collection of existing texts and observations recorded in field notes and photographs are explained.

Representations of Tuvalu are classified as follows. First, there are what I call *existing representations* of Tuvalu produced beyond the realms of this study. Second, there are *elicited representations* produced as a result of the research process (Peräkylä 2005). Most of the former are texts and images freely available in the public domain or for purchase, and which I identified using catalogue, database and internet searches. I gathered elicited representations in

¹⁵ *Palagi* means a European foreigner in Tuvaluan, Tuvalu's primary language.

the form of semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Before conducting interviews, I drafted a list of questions and gained approval from the University of Tasmania Ethics Committee¹⁶ for my interview schedule (Appendix 1). The approach I used has the advantages of allowing open-ended questions and answers on Tuvalu, islands and climate change and provides an opportunity for participants to raise issues during the interview that I have not previously considered (Valentine 2005). A total of 22 weeks was spent observing daily life in Tuvalu. Participant observation was mainly conducted in public spaces. Some observations in homes and offices were possible when interviews were located in these and during time I spent volunteering at the office of the Tuvalu Red Cross with the Natural Disasters and Climate Change Officer for one day a week between January and March 2006. Of particular importance were my observations of activities and events surrounding three occurrences of king tide flooding for several days in each of January, February and March 2006.

To source existing representations of the Tuvalu islands I used catalogues, database searches and verbal inquiries to staff in various libraries, institutions and Internet sites. Using these techniques I sourced photographs, poems, descriptions, media reports, debates, tourism brochures, films, books, speeches, Parliamentary records, postage stamps, unpublished research papers, newsletters, judgements, event programs, and policy documents. In addition, a small number of written but unelicited personal reflections have

¹⁶ This process is necessary and useful but does not preclude further critical self-reflection by the researcher (Winchester 1996).

been made available to me by various contributors to climate change discourses on condition that their source be unidentified.

To assist in collecting existing representations of Tuvalu and also to conduct interviews, I travelled from Australia to Tuvalu via Fiji three times.¹⁷ Gaining permission from the Government of Tuvalu to conduct the research, I spent six weeks in Tuvalu in 2005, 10 weeks in early 2006 and a further six weeks in late 2006. Apart from a five day trip to Tuvalu's three northernmost islands, my time there was spent on the capital, Funafuti.

Interviews were mainly conducted over several weeks in the second half of 2005. Using professional engagement with climate change as a selection criterion, the organisations from which participants were drawn were identified during my literature review on Tuvalu and during several conversations I had when I first arrived in Tuvalu. Using those information-gathering conversations, written sources, and snowball sampling, I identified participants who were involved in climate change discourse in some way in Tuvaluan civil service and politics, religious organisations, Tuvaluan and international media, non-government organisations, education and research. I employed a student from the University of the South Pacific Centre on Funafuti¹⁸ to assist in identifying participants, help arrange interview times and locations, and provide a small amount of translation. Only one participant spoke Tuvaluan during the interview, with translation provided by the student. For the most part, participants with a professional engagement in climate

¹⁷ Due to time and personal health constraints, I was obliged to make three separate trips by air rather than sea, problematically creating a large carbon footprint for this project.

¹⁸ Now known as the University of the South Pacific Tuvalu Campus.

change speak excellent English. Most but not all were Tuvaluan citizens. Participants included politicians, bureaucrats, community leaders, pastors, journalists, consultants, students, educators and employees and volunteers of non-government organisations. I interviewed 22 males and 9 females, generally aged in their twenties, thirties, forties or fifties of which three were young people and four elders. Participants were not asked their age during interviews. Young people were identified as such from their occupation as either student or youth group representative. Elders were those who are elected community leaders. Invitations were communicated either by visiting an organisation in person or by sending a letter in advance to potential participants. I gained informed consent from invited participants by providing an Information Sheet (Appendix 2). That document outlined the details of the project, explained my commitment to participant confidentiality, and affirmed that the project is subject to ongoing monitoring by the University of Tasmania Ethics Committee. I communicated key points in the Information Sheet to participants before each interview commenced. Twenty six interviews were carried out in Tuvalu, two in Australia and one in Fiji. A further two interviews were conducted by email with participants remote from Funafuti, Fiji, Hobart and Sydney. On average, spoken interviews lasted one hour. They were taped, transcribed and thematically analysed for islographic content. For example, the following interview extract has been interpreted as an emotional islograph, where fear, suffering and isolation linked to loss of land and loss of governance are anticipated as an effect of climate change:

P24: Here in Tuvalu, because we are small, it will be *so hard* for us because we are low lying islands so if sea level is rising we will *suffer very much* because the sea

will be taking our land so we don't have a place to live. We don't have land to build now. We don't have any place to live. So we lose all our property. We don't have a government, we don't have everything, economy. *We will be stranded.*

Where reference is made to interview transcripts in this work, I refrain from including identifying attributions beyond a numbering system: P1 to P31. I encouraged participant scrutiny of my research. Because research results need to be communicated to participants in exchange for information shared (Howitt and Stevens 2005), I delivered each transcript to the relevant participant for checking and changing, and all were invited to comment upon a short summary of my findings at that point. This process elicited written comments and discussions from three participants that were also included in my data set.

Existing representations of Tuvalu were also sourced from observations of two climate change events that I attended in Australia and Tuvalu, using participant observation techniques, recorded in field notes and then thematically analysed for islographic content. Events I attended are as follows:

1. 'Human Rights and Environment Seminar' and 'Energy, Poverty and the Rising Sea', Friends of the Earth - Climate Justice Tour, 3rd - 4th May 2004, Redfern, Australia.
2. 'Climate Change Awareness Raising Workshop' The Tuvalu Department of Environment and WWF South Pacific, 14th-16th February 2006.

With a commitment to reciprocity to the Tuvaluan Government for supporting and participating in my research, in September 2005 I held a community forum at which I presented a summary of my work as it then stood. I invited members of the Funafuti community to attend, and recorded an audience discussion that followed my presentation. Attendees included community elders, pastors, students, church youth, representatives of women's groups, and other interested people. The forum enabled me to open up my work for critique and challenge (Teaiwa 2001). Where reference is made to the forum transcript in this work, I identify attributions according to a numbering system: F1 – F15.

In this study, I report on an extensive analysis of interviews and publicly accessible texts generated in relation to Tuvalu and climate change. Attention has been paid to how climate change debate is constituted around islandness in these texts. Collection of existing texts commenced in March 2004 and continued until June 2007. Initially, approximately 500 texts from approximately 800,000 available on the Internet through the Google search engine were randomly selected and read to identify broad themes. Each of these texts was downloaded and saved electronically. Authorship and surface meaning were recorded. From this initial reading, it became apparent that many texts on Tuvalu and climate change were produced by various Western news media and environmentalist organisations. From the initial range of 500, texts from one media and two environmentalist organisations were selected for in-depth analysis: Sydney Morning Herald news reports between 1990

(when climate change and sea level rise began to appear in news media) and the end of the data collection period for this study; Mark Lynas' popular science narrative *High Tide* (Lynas 2004b) which was written after the author spent a one-off period of some weeks on Funafuti; and activities of environmental non-government organisation Alofa Tuvalu, commencing with a documentary released in 2004 and continuing until the end of the data collection period. In depth analysis of these texts and the interview transcripts involved recording patterns of island meanings in and across statements produced in and around these contexts. Using characteristics of islandness described in detail in the following chapter, this process allowed interpretation of different representations of island realities (Jørgenson and Phillips 2002). Representations are presented throughout this work using descriptions and quotations and augmented with accompanying analysis. I minimise examination of images such as photographs. This decision is difficult, but there is simply insufficient scope to do them analytical justice without making this work unwieldy. Lack of analytical attention to images is an important limitation of this study's empirical reach.

Towards an ethical approach

I have been asked many times why I chose to conduct my research on Tuvalu. In answering I honestly state that, like many other people in Australia, I have been alerted to Tuvalu's potential climate change impacts, particularly sea level rise, via popular media such as news articles, internet sites and documentaries. Such discourses sparked my interest in knowing more about representations of Tuvalu. I was also keen to know how members of Tuvalu's

population perceived the interest being shown in their islands among people around the world.

It is important to reiterate that in this work I am not merely commenting on islographs of Tuvalu, I am actively contributing to such representations. I have placed academic papers, opinion pieces and essays in the public domain and distributed them to various participants and others with an interest in Tuvalu and/or climate change (Farbotko 2004; 2005a; 2005b; 2006a; 2006b; 2006c; 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2008)¹⁹. During my time in Tuvalu, I had discussions on climate change with journalists, other researchers and artists. In conducting interviews with participants and holding a community forum, I may have brought certain issues about climate change to the fore and suppressed others in people's minds. It would be foolish of me to ignore my role in the constitution of Tuvalu's islographs. Indeed, my work has been cited in a widely read climate change text, a volume of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC)²⁰ *Fourth Assessment Report* (Mimura et

¹⁹ Research output is also a validity checking method and part of my responsibility as a scholar. The main reason for placing my work in the public domain is to open it up to scrutiny among island scholars, island practitioners and, more broadly, geographers. Scholarly scrutiny took several forms: discussions with my supervisors, publication of a peer-reviewed journal article and presentation at seminars at the University of Tasmania and at international conferences. Some of the specific material on ethical obligations in this section of this dissertation was presented in embryonic form at the International Small Island Studies Association Conference in Maui in 2006 (Farbotko 2006a). My intention in doing so was to open up ethical issues in this research to scrutiny among a group of island scholars and practitioners. The feedback I received at the conference has contributed to the development of this chapter.

²⁰ The IPCC is the body established by the World Meteorological Program and the United Nations to provide at regular intervals an assessment of the state of knowledge on climate change. It aims to provide scientific, technical and socio-economic advice to the world community, in particular to the parties to the UNFCCC. The IPCC has also been partly credited with maintaining the salience of climate change as an environmental issue (Agrawala 1998).

al. 2007), and discussed in the journal *Nature*²¹ (Patel 2006). Far from being merely 'superfluous handwringing or ... foolhardy self-exposure better suited to the confessional' (Besnier 2000, 38), reflections on my role in islographic processes are important to ensure that it is trustworthy for participants and for the academy. Addressing these issues involves attempting to balance different interests: ensuring research is useful and accountable to the Australian academy and the Australian taxpaying population who respectively supported and funded it, to the Tuvaluan Government who authorised my research, and to the members of the Tuvaluan and other populations who participated in it.

These issues are of particular sensitivity because the Australian Government is a major aid donor to Tuvalu. Furthermore, under immediate past Prime Minister John Howard, the Australian and successive Tuvaluan governments have maintained conflicting policy positions on climate change (Farbotko 2005a). Australians have been singled out and berated by a Tuvaluan Ambassador to the United Nations; for instance, for failing to consider the climate change consequences of their fossil fuel consumption practices (Sopoaga 2005). Such matters are underscored by the fact that citizens of Australia contribute significantly more to climate change in the way of pollutants than do Tuvaluans on a per capita basis. Climate change results from increasingly abundant release into the atmosphere of carbon based compounds from industrial and agricultural processes. Such compounds include carbon dioxide and methane. Molecules of these compounds from

²¹ *Nature* is, according to its own website, the most cited weekly science journal (<http://www.nature.com/nature/about/index.html>, accessed 27 August 2007). It was ranked as the fifteenth highest science journal in terms of impact factor for 2006 by Thomson/ISI (Institute for Scientific Information).

dispersed sources all over the world accumulate in the atmosphere. Their increasing concentrations there transform the complex global climate system. On average, inhabitants of Oceania produce one quarter as many carbon dioxide emissions as the average person worldwide (Nurse et al. 2001).

To incorporate these issues into an ethical research agenda and practice, it is important to draw on self-reflexive monitoring by other researchers who have worked with different groups in Tuvalu (Besnier 2000; Chambers and Chambers 2001; 2002; Goldsmith 2000). Reviewing such studies, it is imperative that strategic identity building by communities within Tuvalu be taken into account. An anthropologist who has spent a great deal of time on Nukulaelae, one of the nine islands in the Tuvaluan archipelago, has observed processes of strategic identity building among the Nukulaelae community:

I gradually came to understand that the cover story of the community as an exemplar of harmony and unity was a powerful ideological construct that Nukulaelae Islanders have perfected over a century and a half of interaction with the outside world (Besnier 2000, 24).

Such a construct is not confined to Nukulaelae. On Vaitupu, a social order is presented to the outside world based on 'community solidarity and cohesion' (Isala 1987, 110). Moreover, and not uncritically, Besnier (2000) and Goldsmith (1989) suggest that such strategic identity building has also occurred in the context of the larger national community. In historical records, Besnier (2000) finds evidence that an idealised image of Tuvaluan society has been mobilised by its members in interactions with others. In this image,

harmony, communitarian values and consensus are central. The image was of fundamental importance during the British colonial pairing of the Ellice Islands with the Gilbert Islands (now part of Kiribati) under the same administrative umbrella - the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. It was the Ellice Islanders that the British favoured because of certain characteristics they perceived in them. The Ellice Islanders are recorded as being peaceful, civilised and industrious.²² Such characteristics brought them closer than the Gilbertese to a favoured self image possessed by the British. Besnier also notes that images of peace and harmony continue to be of use to Tuvaluan people after independence: in negotiations for aid and by Tuvaluan migrants in New Zealand in their dealings with governmental authorities there. Heeding these analyses, however, it is also important to note that:

Communities are not homogeneous, do not agree on the same issues, and do not live in splendid isolation from the world. There are internal relations of power, as in any

²² Characterising Tuvaluan people on the basis of 'race' was a profoundly problematic scientific endeavour among Western researchers until well into the twentieth century. Hedley (1897, 229, emphasis added) for instance, wrote:

The natives of the Ellice Group appear to be more closely allied to those of the Phoenix and Union Groups, and also to those of several small outlying islands and atolls in the same neighbourhood, extending perhaps as far as Rotumah and Fotuna. This branch of the Polynesian Race may, for want of a better comprehensive term, be called the Tokelau People ... [they] are closely related to the Samoans, *whose standard of civilisation is, however, far superior. Either therefore, they have degenerated, as is probable, amid unfavourable surroundings or they branched from the parent stock before the latter reached the degree of superiority they afterwards attained.*

Koch (1961, 11, emphasis added) wrote of Tuvaluans as follows:

It is simply not true to maintain, as many people do, that in the past these islanders, in accordance with Polynesian custom, lived a comfortable life and because of their easy-going manner were unreliable. They are more active (to the point of excitability) and more tenacious than the Samoans and Tongans, for example, and will help anyone who becomes their friend in a selfless and faithful manner, which is rarely found elsewhere. *They thus combine the good qualities of the Polynesian race; high intelligence, enduring equanimity through good or ill, daring courage and a marked sense of humour. Like all Polynesians they love singing and dancing and their sense of the community is so strong that it influences all the important aspects of their daily life. Although these islanders possess a natural dignity and a certain self-assurance, they do not have the same pride as the Samoans and Tongans. Their communal life is much simpler and less formal ... Their culture is very simple.*

society, that exclude, marginalise and silence some while empowering others
(Tuhiwai Smith 2005, 87).

Chambers and Chambers (2002) highlight a projected external image of cohesion in their anthropological work with the Nanumean community of Tuvalu. This image finds expression partly in the self definition of the community as descendants of Nanumea's legendary founder, Tefoloha. The strength of this identity, however, masks internal division. Different versions of what happened to Tefoloha's descendants structure conflict in the community:

One family, for example, stressed the founder's allocation of a key leadership role to [Tefoloha's] youngest son, who was, not surprisingly, a founding ancestor for them. Another family's story, focusing on several generations lower down in the same family tree, emphasized the role one descendant of that youngest son had played in outsmarting and killing invaders while other leaders fled for safety to a neighbouring island. This event legitimated the family's current political claims ... Clearly, the political fortunes of extended families wax and wane at least partly in response to the persuasiveness with which their members wield their versions of historical-mythical narratives (Chambers and Chambers 2002, 162).

In his work on Nukulaelae, much of which focussed on analysing gossip, Besnier also gradually came to see internal division where he had previously only seen peace and harmony:

My increasingly modulated understanding of the social dynamics and structural context of the community gave me a new perspective on atoll life as rife with discord and injustice ... My focus on sensitive issues raises questions about whose voice I

should articulate in my ethnographic work. At least two sets of voices emerge: the official version of reality, ratified and articulated by the powers that be ... and the unsanctioned version of reality, illustrated by the painful experiences of marginalised individuals ... whose dissenting voices I have come to know gradually but intimately over years of fieldwork. [Moreover] these two sets of voices are not necessarily homogeneous entities, and the boundary between them is often difficult to identify (Besnier 2000, 24).

In pondering these two sets of voices, Besnier raised a very important ethical question: to what extent is it justifiable for a researcher to expose a projected image of community cohesion that has been so useful to a small community in their dealings with increasingly globalised forces? What might such exposure mean, given work in cultural geography that has shown how strategic place based identities can be very useful to marginalised peoples (Gombay 2005; Perreault 2001)? In the following extract, one of the participants I interviewed is explicit in voicing his concern that my research might contribute to a negative representation of Tuvalu, and my identity as an Australian and a researcher were raised as important considerations:

Interviewer: How would you like people to see Tuvalu?

P1: If I just came back from Australia, I won't try to say something that people in Australia won't like to hear. I wouldn't say something bad about Australia.

Interviewer: Even if you didn't like the place?

P1: Well, I will put it in a way that people will try and understand it. But its no use telling them ... I mean, there is always a bad side of a country, but first of all, we

have to respect what's in their country ... because if you go to the country, it doesn't mean you have to see the bad side of the country, no, you are there, if you come back, it means you are okay, so why tell people about the bad side of the country? Even though in reality there is, but if it doesn't affect you, then just leave it alone.

This interview took place a few weeks after a motion was passed in the Tuvaluan Parliament, 'that the Government of Tuvalu should be more aware of the journalists who are coming into the country' (Tuvalu Parliament 2005). The rationale for this motion was described thus:

There are so many different views given to these journalists, that is why we bring up this issue for it can really affect our country in some ways. Some say that Tuvalu is sinking as the result of sea level rise, but some say that all this is not true at all. The main objective of the motion is that the Government should have a particular body or contact point that can meet with these journalists. So when these people come they don't need to look around for information because there's these appointed people that could answer their queries. But if these journalists still want more information from our citizens then everything could be organized by the contact point (Hon. Kausea Natano, cited in Tuvalu Parliament 2005, np).

The activities of journalists and others, such as researchers, were debated in Parliament as an important mechanism for maintaining control over Tuvalu's image. News media corporations were viewed as a possible source of revenue for the country:

There should be a fee charged to these people. Of course these people should be screened, they can't just enter the country to come and produce documentaries for their earnings, especially when they are big and well known companies ... [also]

single journalists could become a problem to our country; because they could interfere with our relationship with other bigger countries concerning this issue 'the sea level rise' or else other economic issues that the Ministry of Finance is not aware of. So we should take care of these kinds of people who write stories about Tuvalu more carefully (Hon. Alesana K. Seluka, cited in Tuvalu Parliament 2005, np)

We do understand that the point of this motion is that we don't want these journalists to come and just make use of us, citizens of Tuvalu. Therefore I strongly support the idea that there should be a body or Ministry to take care of this, where they have the power to allow or not allow journalists into the country (Hon. Elisala Pita, cited in Tuvalu Parliament 2005, np).

Alert to the power of interest in their country as 'disappearing islands', my identity as an Australian and an outsider plays an important role in many conversations I had with Tuvaluans about climate change. Participants were likely to have been cautious about what they said to me in interviews. Such a concern would have been particularly likely among Government officials and politicians. Indeed, some participants told me that they were being careful, precisely because I was Australian. In response I did make it clear that I was not in any way associated with the Australian Government. Nevertheless, most participants were reluctant to criticise Australian Government climate change policies.

In addition to these considerations, it is important for methodological purposes to take into account that the people I interviewed were generally well educated, professional individuals, and/or in positions of leadership at national or sub-national levels in Tuvalu. As a young female student, carrying

out my research in Tuvalu's capital, in the offices of Government officials, community and religious leaders, and politicians, I was interviewing what were to me foreign elites in a male dominated society. Such work is qualitatively different from interviewing non-foreign elites or foreign non-elites. Self-reflexivity in this type of research is important in ensuring that insider/outsider dichotomies are not approached uncritically as delimiters of the validity and meaningfulness of ensuing conversations (Herod 1999). Much of the work in which participants are engaged, in government especially, can broadly be characterised as negotiations for Tuvaluan interests with foreign governments and international agencies. Many participants are local experts in international climate change discourse, and have been interviewed multiple times by other researchers, journalists and documentary makers. Such experts are informally yet powerfully socially positioned to interact with foreigners such as myself, positions formally acknowledged in the parliamentary motion cited above. As a *palagi*, I am in a weak location from which to engage with locals not already positioned as spokespeople on climate change issues.

Given my engagement with an educated, professional segment of the population of Tuvalu, the very real possibility is raised that this research reinstates local forms of colonialism by denying some members of the population a voice. Such concerns are important to acknowledge, and need also be balanced with the limitations of a doctoral research project in island studies and the specificities of Tuvalu's postcolonial social landscape. Competency in Tuvaluan is highly desirable for engaging with certain sectors of the population, particularly children and the elderly. Not being an

anthropologist, and given the relatively short time available to complete a doctoral study in Australia, long term field work in Tuvalu in order to become fluent in Tuvaluan was unfortunately not practicable. However, Tuvalu's 'elite' is neither violent nor authoritarian, and highly stratified differences in wealth are largely absent among the population. While inequalities of opportunity contribute to hardship in Tuvalu, kinship obligations and accompanying assistance to those in adversity remain significant. Members of the population tend to perceive a sense of shared rather than individual disadvantage (Zuñiga 2003). Positions of leadership in Tuvalu are often gained by the extent to which leaders and successful entrepreneurs are willing to give away personal wealth to supporters. This practice has been tested and endorsed in the courts,²³ even though some argue that they conflict with formal accountability in the public service and among elected representatives (Taafaki 2004; Zuñiga 2003). This complex picture of power relations in Tuvalu defies simplistic understandings of a powerful, wealthy elite and a disadvantaged non-elite.

Given the foregoing considerations of the context in which this research was carried out, it is perhaps not surprising that most of my interviews became the means by which participants conveyed to me the same political message I had responded to in the first place. In ethically produced, mutually agreed conversations, I was mostly only granted access to an image of Tuvaluan cohesion, a community united in its overall position on climate change and

²³ I observed an unreported High Court case in 2006 challenging the legality of Prime Minister Apisai Ielemia's election results on the grounds of unlawfully making cash gifts to voters during the electoral campaign. The making of such gifts was held by the court to be accepted cultural practice, and the Prime Minister retained his office.

such a position may have been just as faithfully conveyed to me by non-elite members of the population. This position maintains that Tuvalu is highly vulnerable to climate change; that it is inequitable that Tuvalu's inhabitants contribute negligible amounts to the problem, without sufficient remedy from those who do and can afford to help (Australians being a case in point); and that the Tuvaluan community is valuable, unique, united, peaceful and strong and worthy of protection. Dissenting or disengaged voices about climate nevertheless exist: five people I approached declined to be interviewed. One of these informed my research assistant that 'there were too many people coming to Tuvalu to talk about climate change'. Another stated, 'I have been hearing about climate change for a long time but I don't see anything happening'. Two more declined to be interviewed because doing so would clash with their Christian religious beliefs that God would protect them from future harm. A fifth was a bureaucrat who had little patience for a researcher interrupting the work of his department.

The almost completely united community identity that I encountered among Tuvaluans is not to be read as inauthenticity. All identities are relational, ongoing practices. While identity building is politically strategic, and not separate from knowledge generation, the process does not necessarily equate with opportunistic 'invention':

[T]he process of social and cultural persistence is political all the way back ... cultural forms will always be made, unmade, and remade. Communities can and must reconfigure themselves, drawing selectively on remembered pasts. The relevant question is whether, and how, they convince and coerce insiders and outsiders, often

in power-charged, unequal situations, to accept the autonomy of a “we” (Clifford 2001, 480).

Gupta and Ferguson (1997) stress that

identity neither “grows out” of rooted communities nor is it a thing that can be possessed or owned by individual or collective social actors. It is instead, a mobile, often unstable relation of difference.

For researchers, encountering and scrutinising community cohesion as a political tool does not have to equate with undermining it. Opening up identity construction to critical discussion can be a strengthening device, especially if reported back to the people with whom it was fostered in a mutually agreed conversation. As well as intending to deposit copies of this dissertation in libraries in Tuvalu, I regularly distributed draft papers among my contacts there for feedback and critique. Furthermore, used uncritically, political tools can do harm as well as good. While an image of community cohesion may be useful in some circumstances, are there other politico-cultural devices that could be fruitfully mobilised? I undertake my analysis of Tuvalu’s islographs with these issues firmly in mind.

Outline of dissertation

In this chapter I have addressed my first and second objectives, namely, to introduce the concept of the islograph and to detail and justify my research methods. In Chapter Two, I turn to the third objective of this work, which is to

review scholarly critiques of island representations. I review critical island scholarship that investigates and comments on the strong presence of islands in Western discourses. I argue that critical island scholarship is providing useful mechanisms for investigating islands as paradoxes, and I signal my intention to employ these tools in my analysis of Tuvalu's islographs.

In Chapter Three, I provide an overview of key points in Tuvalu's history, addressing my fourth objective. This chapter contextualises my later analyses of Tuvalu's islographs. I demonstrate that Tuvalu has undergone a dramatic change in representation. Once almost invisible, it became much more highly visible space as climate change became an issue on the international political agenda.

The fifth objective is to describe islographs of Tuvalu in climate change discourses, by analysing a selection of representations produced by a range of contributors to these discourses. I address this objective in Chapters Four and Five. In Chapter Four, I examine what I have classified as environmentalist islographs. I analyse how contributors to various environmentalist campaigns aimed at addressing the problem of climate change represent Tuvalu in their work. In Chapter Five, I examine what I have classified as journalist islographs. I analyse how Tuvalu is represented in various claims made in support of climate change 'truths'.

In Chapter Six, I address my sixth objective, which is to consider resistances to outside islographs. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with inhabitants

of Tuvalu, I show how attempts are being made to reclaim Tuvalu as inherently valuable space.

In Chapter Seven, I summarise the work and its significance, and draw conclusions on what Tuvalu has come to mean in climate change discourses. I highlight the importance of representational issues for island communities facing significant climate change impacts - in Tuvalu and elsewhere - and for policy-makers, politicians, journalists and academics.

Chapter 2: Scholarly islographs

Introduction

Island representations are prevalent in Western discourses (Gillis 2004; Hay 2006). The third objective of this work is to describe and critically review scholarly work on such island representations, acknowledging that there are also many non-Western discourses of island space. This chapter contains a review of island scholarship that investigates and comments upon how island representations can be implicated in relations of power in a general sense, a necessary task before turning to the specific case of representations of Tuvalu in climate change discourses in the remainder of this work.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, recognising that scholarly engagements with islands are themselves islographic, three distinct islographs in a body of work called island studies are identified and described. I characterise these three islographs as *fixed*, *fluid* and *fascination* islographs, and speculate about which of these have the most to offer in terms of elucidating, and changing, how islands are implicated in relations of power – a matter I resolve in the discussion. Second, I describe how insights from these three islographs enable critical comment on the remarkably strong presence of island representations in Western discourses. I use insights from my analysis of them to draw out the two key characteristics of Western islographs: islands as paradoxical spaces; and islands as imaginative geographies of identity construction.

Sometimes referred to as nissology (McCall 1994; 1996), for the purposes of this work, island studies is defined as scholarship in which the category 'island' is problematised or investigated as an intervening variable (Baldacchino 2004a). It does not privilege scholarship in which islands function as unproblematised sites for other analyses. Some works that fall within the ambit of island studies are based on the premise that island studies is an academic discipline unto itself (Baldacchino 2004a; 2006; Hay 2006; McCall 1994; 1996). Other works in which the category 'island' is problematised adhere more closely to other academic disciplines. These disciplines include cultural studies (Beer 1989; 1990; Deloughrey 2001; McMahon 2003; Polack 2000), economics and development studies (Biagini and Hoyle 1999; Briguglio 1995; Briguglio and Kaminarides 1993; Dommen 1980b; Doumenge 1998; Prasad 2003; Selwyn 1980), epidemiology (Cliff and Haggett 1995), geography (Anckar 1996; Connell 2003a; Dodds and Royle 2003; Farbotko 2007a; Greenhough 2006; King 1993; Law 2005; Lowenthal 2007; Nunn 2006; Royle 2001; Stratford 2006; 2008; Tuan 1995), psychology (Abell et al. 2006) and tourism studies (Baum 1997).

Scholarly engagements with islands are not a recent undertaking. Island inhabitants are strongly communal according to Semple's environmental determinism (Semple 1911). They make ideal field-sites for scholarly work according to Mead (1928), resembling the highly controlled conditions of laboratories, in which to pursue positivist studies of social systems. They are microcosms of the larger world, 'ready-made isolates for study' according to Spate (1963, 253). They are, according to some, of questionable analytic

utility. Selwyn (1980, 945-946) argues that there is little to be gained from demarcating 'island countries' from a larger group of 'small countries'. Selwyn argues that it is not islandness *per se* which is at issue, but remoteness, peripherality, and decline in self-reliance - all characteristics that might be matched in mainland areas.

Islographs: fixed, fluid and fascination

Recall from Chapter One that islographs encapsulate coherent suites of island representations and their constitutive roles in relations of power. Scholarly islographs reflect the power and interests of the academics and institutions associated with their production. Debate within island studies over island characteristics and what constitutes valid knowledge of islands make useful foci for examining such roles. Analysing these debates, I identify three distinct scholarly islographs in island studies.

In what I characterise as the *fixed islograph*, islands are represented as objects in the landscape inscribed with innate meaning and possessing natural boundaries. Islanders are represented as possessing a unique island identity and valid island knowledge is derived from a realm called the real. The fixed islograph promotes islands as simple, Euclidean spaces. In what I categorise as the *fluid islograph*, islands are represented as spatial categories as well as tangible objects. Their meaning is not innate; they are instead understood as fluid political tools as well as landscape features. The fluid islograph promotes islands as complex, fractal spaces. Valid island knowledge is

assumed to derive from a realm of representation as well as from a realm of the real. The *fascination islograph* is constituted by emotions, expressions of island fascination, discernable in both fluid and fixed islographs and yet distinct from them. In the following sections, I describe and evaluate these islographs in detail.

The fixed islograph

The first characteristic of the fixed islograph is that island truths and valid island knowledge are represented as residing primarily in a realm called the real. This realm encompasses islands as tangible parcels of land surrounded by water, and embraces the people who live on them. It is with the realm of the real that island scholarship should be concerned, according to advocates of the fixed islograph:

Nissological [island] investigation ... should ... concern itself with the reality of islands and how it is for islands and islanders in the times that are here and that are emerging ... [unless] metaphoric transcriptions of islands rebound upon real islands and influence life there (Hay 2006, 30).

Scholarship in the realm of the real attempts to reclaim islands from what its proponents argue to be the unhelpful shackles of outsider or imaginary perspectives. Calls to 'study islands on their own terms' (McCall 1994) and to 'rescue the real' of islands (Hay 2006, 26) indicate strong (but not necessarily singular) commitment to the fixed islograph. Hay (2006), for instance, draws conceptual battle lines between 'real' and 'metaphorical' islands and McCall (1994) attempts to remove 'continental' perspectives on islands. In the fixed

islograph, understandings of islands are hindered rather than helped by metaphorical engagements with islands in works of art or literature, or by gazes from outside:

So powerful is the metaphorical idea of the island that it can be deployed in the absence of even the slightest reference to the reality of islands. Those who live real lives on islands are entitled to resent this (Hay 2006, 30).

Representations of islands as naturally bounded also characterise the fixed islograph. They are simple, Euclidean spaces. On islands, 'the geographical features between land and sea constitute boundaries' and so islands are 'easily definable' (Dodds and Royle 2003, 487). Island boundaries have an apparent innateness, an assumed transparency of meaning. Boundaries of islands seem to be inscribed in the landscape by nature, not by cultural practices, marking islands off as somehow intrinsically different from other places:

An island is a most enticing form of land. Symbol of the eternal contest between land and water, islands are detached, self-contained entities whose *boundaries are obvious*; all other land divisions are more or less arbitrary (King 1993, 13, emphasis added).

Representations of the interfaces between land and sea on islands as natural boundaries rely on a conceptualisation of space as absolute. Such a conceptualisation is historically contingent on the works of Newton, Kant and Descartes. Drawing on Euclidean geometry, these thinkers were profoundly influential in representing space as 'infinite and a priori ... geometrically divisible into discrete bits' (Smith and Katz 1993, 75). Islands seem to be

natural containers, definable according to 'a co-ordinate system of discrete and mutually exclusive locations' (Smith and Katz 1993, 75).

Fixed islographs also include representations of islanders as possessing unique island identities linked directly to coasts perceived as natural boundaries.

Links between islanders and islands are seen to foster particular island senses of place:

Islands - real islands, real geographical entities - attract affection, loyalty, identification. And what do you get when you take a bounded geographical entity and add an investment of human attachment, loyalty and meaning? You get the phenomenon known as 'place'. Islands are places - special places, paradigmatic places, topographies of meaning in which the qualities that construct place are dramatically distilled (Hay 2006, 31).

The fixed islograph also tends to environmental determinism. For instance, in the following extracts, islanders are represented as different from continental dwellers, their very humanity and sense of community environmentally determined:

For island dwellers, the omnipresence of the sea intensifies the feeling of being cut off from the world. With the surface of the island being so obviously finite, the involution assigns added value to all local, and obviously finite, assets ... Being in close proximity to the sea and the sky, the inhabitants are at the mercy of the natural elements - especially wind, storms and the sea ... This is the constant reality of life that all islanders have in common ... For those living on an island, it is clearly the centre of the world. The maritime border surrounding it is always there, solid, totalising and domineering, tightening the bonds between island folk, who thus

experience a stronger sense of closeness and solidarity ... being forever attentive to the fine-tuning of personal relationships is a requirement for those who wish to survive as members of a small island community. This tends to make island dwellers more human (Péron 2004, 29).

The key feature of islands is of course the shoreline - the fixed but ever shifting perimeter ... Those who live inside this shoreline have a powerful sense of community - of communal home - *dictated by geography* (Baglolle 2003, cited in Hay 2006, 21, emphasis added).

That islands are objects in the landscape inscribed with innate meaning, that 'the very boundedness of islands makes them different' (Hay 2003, 553) and that islanders possess an environmentally determined identity, summarises the characteristics of the fixed islograph. The research with which it is associated prioritises engagement with island physical environments and social life.

The fluid islograph

The first characteristic of the fluid islograph is that island truths and valid island knowledge are represented as culturally and historically situated. Island meanings are understood to vary, and island geographies may or may not be influential means of identification for people who live on them:

One of the characteristics of people who live on an island is that, if this original geographical characteristic is meaningful to them, they will precisely make use of it to assert their identity. In other words, islanders are not necessarily people who are geographically surrounded by the sea, but a people who say that they are geographically surrounded by the sea, or that they belong to a human group which is so (Hache 1998, 47).

This argument is fluidly islographic, advocating relational approaches to island questions. Hache (1998) points out that historical moments when territories become meaningful to inhabitants of particular islands, *as* islands, are vitally important, as are the forces which brought them about. Within the fluid islograph, valid island meanings and identities are about shifting representations of islands as much as they are about the tangible objects in the landscape and the people who live on them. Indeed, identifying who represents islands, and how, is considered to be vitally important for furthering knowledge of islands. Baldacchino (2004a; 2005), Beer (1989; 2003), Deloughrey (2001), Dodds and Royle (2003), Edmond and Smith (2003b), Hache (1998), Hau'ofa (1993), McMahon (2003), Lowenthal (2007) and Polack (2000) have suggested that islands cannot be fully understood with reference only to island landscapes and the social lives of their inhabitants. Their varying approaches to questions of islands have a common thread that is fluidly islographic: as much as islands are constituted in empirically meaningful ways, there are no singular or universal truths to be derived from islands. Instead, an important task for island scholars is to critically assess multiple and possibly conflicting representations of island space.

That islands are political tools as much as they are objects in the landscape is the second characteristic of the fluid islograph. The fluid islograph represents islands as ripe for problematisation. It requires scholars of islands to identify and unsettle conundrums such as: 'islands are not islands, in the sense that

they are not closed unto themselves' (Baldacchino 2004a, 273). It also requires them to ask questions on changing meanings, such as:

All island habitats depend on links with the world outside. But what kind of links?
And what happens when these links become physically permanent? Is an island
physically linked to a 'mainland' still an island?' (Baldacchino 2004b, 133).

The third characteristic of the fluid islograph is complexity. Islands are represented as physically fluid and representationally fluid - indeed fractal, chaotic:

[N]either are the bounds of the island quite defined: the shore and the sea coexist in a shifting liminality as the tide recedes and reclaims the land. Birds extend the range of the island biota, casting the net of their flight over an extended domain. And now in chaos theory Mandelbrot has argued that the circumference of any shore is so shifting as to be infinite and depends upon the chosen scale of description. Do we count in every last indentation of the bay, the cliff as it crumbles, the packed grain of sand against the wall? So islands are shifty entities, but they keep their magic autonomy, as we may daily see in advertisements. A pristine island, an unpopulated land, a *desert* island: all these are part of the myth of possession and solitude figured by Robinson Crusoe (Beer 2003, 33, emphasis in original).²⁴

²⁴ In a similar vein but different context, King writes:

Consumer perceptions owe more to the mythology of the palm-fringed coral atoll, than to the realities of life in the tropics. In tourism promotions, water is seen as embodying purity, romance, nature and the pleasurable elements, whilst at the same time symbolising luxury through its manipulation by contemporary technology into giant swimming pools, spas, waterfalls and other configurations. Less conveniently for the positive imagery, tropical water is periodically associated with sharks, stonefish, sea wasps, coral cuts and may prompt sunburn. Despite this, holidaymakers appear willing to surrender themselves to the powerful allure of the tropical island idea. They willingly opt for isolated resorts ... [they are] among the most gullible travellers, willingly submitting themselves to they tyranny of the resort corporation, in search of an experience that, they might grudgingly acknowledge, could be an illusion (King 1997, 3-4).

Summarising the characteristics of the fluid islograph, islands are complex spaces with multiple, contested and changing meanings. Research with which the fluid islograph is associated values engagement with island representations, physical environments and social life.

Evaluating the fixed and fluid islographs

Before moving on to the fascination islograph, I evaluate the fixed and fluid scholarly islographs for their contribution to advancing understandings of how island representations can be implicated in relations of power. While thus far I have identified two islographs in island studies, it should be noted that fixed and fluid islographs are not entirely discrete and separate categories, and could be more accurately understood as a continuum. Indeed some individual works and/or authors display characteristics of both. For example, there is a tension in this representation of islands between intangibility and fixity of island boundaries:

By virtue of its *intangible maritime border*, an island lives by a binary rhythm which is quite in tune with the current social requirements of individuals for free access to the whole world, punctuated by temporary withdrawals to the safe confines of the island (Péron 2004, 338, emphasis added).

Nevertheless, it is useful to use the fixed and fluid islographs as distinct for analytical purposes. Turning first to fixed islographs, recall that they are an example of space conceived as absolute. Absolute space is the common-sense space of Western societies that draws a great deal of power, paradoxically, from its apparent neutrality (Smith and Katz 1993). Yet such representations

of space - as essentially and naturally Euclidean - have been shown to be significant in producing and expressing specific relations of power. For instance, the mutually exclusive, discrete spaces of private property, individuals, colonies and nation states that support and are expressive of imperialism, patriarchy and capitalism, depend on absolute space (Smith and Katz 1993). Neutrality of landscapes, such as islands, appears to be possible because landscapes are often assumed to possess unproblematic and intrinsic meaning. To the extent that islands are understood to 'look like property' (Edmond and Smith 2003a, 1), according to the fixed islograph, they are seemingly natural and unproblematic sites for researchers to claim and colonise.

At times, a commitment to absolute space is built into scholarship, and not only that related to islands. Smith and Katz (1993) highlight how the spatial lexicon is increasingly important in feminist, postmodern and postcolonial inquiries and that spatial metaphors are a central mechanism for investigating social life in literary criticism and social theory. They refer to the work of Foucault, who was interested in the capacity of spatial metaphors to help him express 'the relations that are possible between power and knowledge' (Foucault 1980, 69 cited in Smith and Katz 1993, 72) and enable him to redress a problematic emphasis on time over space. Ultimately, however, Foucault relied on an absolute conception of space, finding it useful to hold space constant 'to provide some semblance of order for an otherwise floating world of ideas' (Smith and Katz 1993, 80). Such constancy was important for

projects involving 'a radical questioning of all else, a decentring and destabilization of previously fixed realities' (Smith and Katz 1993, 80).

Deployed as a constant, the apparent neutrality of space can thus be reinforced by members of the academy. Commitment to the fixed islograph, therefore, is complicit in a reluctance to radically question island space. The fixed islograph represents islands as absolute space and insists on valid knowledge being drawn from the realm of the real. Excising representation and locating boundedness and finiteness in the landscape, the fixed islograph allows a comforting graspability. Islands are represented as space that can seemingly, but perhaps ultimately misleadingly, be reduced to a Euclidean manageability for scholars who turn their attention to them.

The presumption that researchers possess an all-seeing perspective, enabling scholarship of islands to be imagined as acts of seeing and knowing small, complete worlds in their entirety, has been demonstrated to be exceedingly problematic when deployed uncritically in research practice. According to Haraway (1991), visibility has been a guiding metaphor for Western academic practices. Particularly under the banner of positivism, academics convince themselves and their audiences that they unproblematically 'see' the world, then conveniently erase themselves from the research story, and record its 'truths'. But the process of linking visibility with objective truths is flawed, and Haraway convincingly argues that it is impossible to have vision from everywhere and yet from nowhere - as if the academic is somehow invisible in the story but knows all. Nevertheless, with their 'obvious optic' (Baldacchino

2004a, 272)²⁵ and visual graspability islands are seemingly ideal field sites in which researchers can conveniently portion off bounded research worlds: small, and admittedly complex worlds, but ultimately knowable *because* they are small and bounded. Islands are more amenable than continents to Haraway's 'god tricks' - the passing off of what are in fact highly subjective research manoeuvres as recordings of objective 'truth' - and as such they are more vulnerable to being appropriated as sites in which to invest the interests of the purportedly 'objective' or invisible academic. Indeed it seems that islands are potent means by which the idea that all knowledge is partial can be denounced, via the combined processes of imagining islands as naturally small bounded worlds and the academic as being blessed with a gaze of this entire bounded world from nowhere and everywhere.

Gillis (2004, 1) argues that Westerners tend to 'think with islands'. He calls this 'islanding'. Islanding supports and is supported by the fixed islograph:

Dividing the world into discrete things, islanding it as a means of understanding, is a peculiarly Western way of navigating a world that seems otherwise without shape and direction. Western thought has always preferred to assign meaning to neatly bounded, insulated things, regarding that which lies between as a void. We not only think of our individual selves as islands, but conceive of nations, communities and families in the same insular fashion, ignoring that which connects in favour of stressing that which separates and isolates (Gillis 2004, 2).

Zerubavel argues similarly for 'islands of meaning':

²⁵ Baldacchino (2004b, 272) succinctly captures what I understand as central characteristics of the fixed islograph: 'an island's "signature" is its obvious optic: it is a geographically finite, total, discrete, sharply precise physical entity which accentuates clear and holistic notions of location and identity'.

We [in Western conceptual paradigms] transform the natural world into a social one by carving out of it mental chunks we then treat as if they were discrete, totally detached from their surroundings. The way we mark off islands of property is but one example of the general process by which we create meaningful social entities (Zerubavel 1991, 5).

In such manner, the fixed islograph is potentially complicit in reinforcing Western representations of islands as naturally graspable and knowable, and it is thus limited for describing and reviewing scholarly critiques of island representations in Western discourses.

Comfortable modes of 'islanding' in scholarship are challenged when scholarship accords with the complex, notably non-Euclidean island systems of the fluid islograph. Its space is not conceived as simple, graspable or absolute but as complex and fractal. According to Appadurai (1990), a fractal reconceptualisation of the world's cultural forms, rejecting commitments to Euclidean boundaries, is useful. Appadurai's argument can be applied in support of the fluid islograph:

What I would like to propose is that we begin to think of the configuration of cultural forms in today's world as fundamentally fractal, that is, as possessing no Euclidean boundaries, structures or regularities. Second, I would suggest that these cultural forms, which we should strive to represent as fully fractal, are also overlapping ... Finally, in order for the theory of global cultural interactions predicated on disjunctive flows to have any force greater than that of a mechanical metaphor, it will have to move into something like a human version of ... 'chaos' theory. That is,

we will need to ask how these complex, overlapping, fractal shapes constitute not a simple, stable (even if large-scale) system, but to ask what its dynamics are (Appadurai 1990, 20).

The fluid islograph, representing islands as complex and fractal, is more suitable than the fixed islograph for describing and reviewing scholarly critiques of island representations in Western discourses. It refuses to represent islands as apparently neutral, absolute space.

The fascination islograph

Thus far I have argued that the fluid islograph has contributions to make in terms of elucidating how islands are implicated in relations of power.

However the fluid islograph also has important limitations. Produced largely in Western projects aimed at advancing understanding of islands, it may reinforce other Western productions of island space. Such reinforcements need to be discussed and I do so in terms of a third islograph in island studies: the islograph of fascination, which overlaps with both the fixed and the fluid islograph.

‘Island’ in a Western sense is by no means a conceptualisation common to all scholarly focus on ‘islands’. Non-Western paradigms of island space have been brought into greater visibility to challenge Western conceptions of islands, particularly in the context of Oceania. It has been shown that islands need to be examined as culturally specific representations that may subjugate alternative land and water scapes, and those who navigate and inhabit them, if knowledge is not to be complicit in sustaining practices of conceptual

colonisation (Hau'ofa 1993; 1998; Ka'ili 2005; Marsters et al. 2006; Mishra 1993; Subramani 1993; Terrell et al. 1997). However, the number of such studies is small and there remains a dominance of island studies by Westerners and a predominance of Western concepts in the field. In the context of Tuvalu's threatened islands, this study goes some way towards showing how Western representations subjugate Tuvalu's inhabitants and their alternative land and water scapes. Future research, however, is needed to document these alternatives in detail.

Of particular importance in the context of predominance of Western island concepts is the issue of *island fascination*. It can take different forms: love of islands; finding them irresistible; collecting island memorabilia; reading about them; dreaming of visiting them; fantasising about living on one; being charmed by islands; and finding them alluring, enthralling. Many island scholars acknowledge an emotional sense of island fascination in their writings, either for themselves as individuals or in an academic collective to which they have an affinity.²⁶ Cliff and Haggett (1995, 199), for instance, write that 'islands have long had a fascination for biologists' and King (1993, 13-14), writing that 'islands spell romance and adventure', has argued that 'for geographers, anthropologists, ecologists and biologists, islands hold a particular attraction'. Similarly, Baldacchino (2004a, 269) states that 'we are obsessed with islands and their mysterious charm', Fitzpatrick (2004b, 3) has 'a deep fascination with islands...[they] have become ... a beacon of attraction, allure and wonder'. Island fascinations can be constitutive of

²⁶ Investigation into island fascination as it manifests beyond academe has also been undertaken (Baum 1997; Péron 2004).

islophilia - love of islands (Baldacchino 2005; Hay 2006) and *islophobia* - fear of islands (Baldacchino 2005). Some even write of *islomania* - island obsession (Baldacchino 2004a; Gillis 2004). Anckar (1996, 697) states that 'analysts of island life are often regarded as naïve romantics: island scholars have trouble in being taken seriously'.

Island fascination seems to be a particularly prominent phenomenon among non-islander researchers such as myself. Gillis (2004, 1) argues that 'islomania is most common among those who seldom, if ever, reside on islands' and Nunn (2006, 253) writes 'I am a non-islander (*sensu stricto*) who has the same deep fascination [with islands]... but I have been associated with island archaeology long enough to understand that most islanders do not share this fascination, nor do they view their island homes with wonder.' *Prima facie*, island fascination among scholars embodies more than detached academic interest. Indeed, it seems to be personal and emotional as well as being academic. Such island fascination, however, often remains just that: acknowledged, but not problematised. Whether observable in relation to the fixed or the fluid islograph (and indeed, it is present amidst both), Mitchell's claim that 'landscape exerts a subtle power over people, eliciting a broad range of emotions and meanings that may be difficult to specify' (Mitchell 2002, vii) needs to be taken seriously in the scholarly islograph context. Expressions of island fascination constitute a fascination islograph.

Supposedly feminine emotions have long been excluded from hegemonic domains of rational knowledge that align with masculinity and a strong case

can be made, consequently, for reinscribing the role of emotions related to islands in research processes. Bondi (2005), for instance, seeks to reintroduce emotions into geographical scholarship in ways that challenge still dominant ideas about valid knowledge as rational. Rather than being detached from, feelings about islands help to constitute, the object that is being examined. For example, various imaginings of islands as simple, as refuges from defeat and loss, as incubators of 'islanditis', as mystical or romantic, as bastions of parochialism, and as objects to possess or covet (McCall 1994; 1996; Royle 2001) can resonate emotionally as well as analytically. Given the need to problematise links between emotion and knowledge, scholars cannot assume that an emotional self is separate from an island researcher self who 'defines the field' as island. Rejecting any notion that island fascination is merely interior and subjective, it is important to problematise boundaries between the researcher self as human subject and his or her productions of island space. This problematisation may be needed whether scholarly islographs are fixed or fluid. Although not all island scholars experience island fascination, taking note of the acknowledgements of island fascination within island scholarship described above, it is significant that many authors tend to stop short of questioning how their personal island fascinations may reinforce, rather than challenge or reformulate, inequitable power relations in research agendas, practices and outcomes.

In the fascination islograph, the island is space on which to inscribe desires for a small world that is more tangible, more graspable and more

understandable than large, complex mainlands, continents or planet Earth.

Such control may be desired by scholars:

The desire to perceive the island as a bounded and therefore controllable space seems to link writing on islands across the sciences and humanities, connecting the most fantastic of island utopias with the most careful of scientific treatises (Edmond and Smith 2003a, 5).

Within the scholarly fascination isograph, the island produced as *laboratory* is of particular relevance. Baldacchino (2006, 5-6) has argued that a 'significant component' of island fascinations are constituted by 'the fact that islands suggest themselves as *tabulae rasae*: potential laboratories for any conceivable human project, in thought or action.' Greenhough (2006, 226) has written that 'islands occupy an unusual and privileged place within the history of science as spaces that echo the ideal conditions of the laboratory'. For example:

Concerning the effects of people on 'the environment', and upon island environments in particular, two opposing views, both highly loaded emotionally, are being advanced. According to a fashionable opinion, traditional societies disturbed the environment very little, while 'devastation' was triggered by the arrival of Europeans. Alternatively, it is maintained that traditional groups also damaged the environment a great deal, being checked, in some cases, only by their poor technology. *Islands provide excellent laboratories in which to test these contrasting views*, since in a continent the vastness of space and the abundance of resources makes it more difficult to assess the ability of traditional societies in environmental conservation (Biagini 1999, 36, emphasis added).

This study is concerned specifically with representations of Tuvalu - as a laboratory - a litmus test, of climate change. Island natural laboratories are powerful signifiers because they help to explain and reinforce finitude and discreteness as means of dividing up the world and producing knowledge. The contemporary world is one in which discrete, certain knowledge is highly valued and uncertainty is a source of conflict and stunts decision-making (Collins and Evans 2002). Within the boundaries of the *idealised* island field-site, there is self-sufficiency and isolation from uncontrollable outside forces, the apparent possibility of spatial closure on knowledge projects. Indeed, Tuvalu has become a site where uncertainty about global climate change is sought to be resolved in and through the quest to know whether or not the sea around its islands is rising. Island laboratories seem to underscore a regressive desire for a world of stable boundaries around, and absolute spaces of, knowledge:

Islands offer the allure of seemingly complete worlds, introspective ecosystems, secured by natural boundaries: empathy and control are simultaneously possible. Sea and island can be taken in panoptically as a singular insular whole. All that exists, whether cultural, economic or physical, can be observed and regulated, qualities that have ensured that islands have been both seen and used as laboratories and which have implied that, in isolation, utopian communities might exist, be established and evolve there (Connell 2003a, 555).

In the extract above, Connell seems to suggest that island laboratories can function as incubators for utopias. Twin myths operate to help construct the

island as a research utopia: an idealised closed, isolated island is not only a complete, perfect world, it is a source of complete, perfect knowledge:

The island, with its hard, clear outline engraved on the hazy surface of the sea, seems to incarnate an isolated and self-sufficient world. It can thus appear as a form of the world that is complete in itself. There is consequently something reassuring about it. It permits an illusion that 'reality' may be experienced in its entirety (Péron 2004, 331).

While ideal islands might seem to be naturally bounded and small field-sites that can be controlled and regulated such that utopian visions might be achieved within them, island laboratories can also be imagined in much less benign ways. As 'closed and comprehensive sites for experimentation' (Edmond and Smith 2003a, 3) islands become sinister spaces where utopias morph readily into dystopias.

Given the foregoing, how might the fascination islograph impact upon island people? While much research on islanders is undoubtedly beneficial, the endorsement and reproduction of islands as natural laboratories has also been demonstrated (in disciplines that centralise understandings of humans and human behaviour such as medicine, human genetics and anthropology) as a partial and situated, not neutral, practice that can contribute to, for example, the medical and cultural subjugation of islanders (Edmond 2003; Greenhough 2006; Terrell et al. 1997). Edmond (2003) provides a chilling history of a leper colony on the Hawaiian island of Molokai, created by Europeans and to some extent supported by Hawaiian royalty. Molokai was imagined as a natural laboratory by researchers in an attempt to prove that leprosy was a

contagious disease. While many of the mainly indigenous Hawaiian inhabitants of the island resisted attempts to literally use them as experimental subjects, one 'human guinea pig' was successfully recruited for medical experimentation. Keanu, a convicted criminal with a death sentence, had a leproma sutured into his arm in exchange for a reduced sentence of life imprisonment. Keanu did indeed develop leprosy, although the European researchers into the disease could not conclusively prove how Keanu had contracted it. Edmond convincingly argued that, despite experimentation, the island of Molokai as an apparently controllable space - a natural laboratory - failed to serve the purpose it was anticipated it could play for Western medicine. Nevertheless, it did result in medical subjugation of islanders as a justifiable process in positivist knowledge generation.

Terrell et al. (1997) have argued that the island laboratory has contributed to the cultural subjugation of islanders. They demonstrate that much Western scholarship of Oceania in the twentieth century tended to view the region's people as occupying 'remote, undeveloped human colonies scattered across a vast and empty expanse of sea' and imagined these spaces as 'convenient laboratories' for particular Western - and positivist - forms of knowledge generation. The island laboratories of the Pacific were imagined to be inhabited by populations isolated in space (and frozen in time), simpler and hence more amenable to holistic understanding than populations elsewhere. Academic interest in Oceanic populations, furthermore, did not stem from a view of island populations as necessarily of interest in their own right. Instead, they served as seemingly isolated laboratories in which to study models of more 'complex' societies, especially in the West:

That bugbear question of where to draw the boundary is often answered for us by the embracing sea. [In the Pacific] we have a whole congeries of little universes, point-economies, ready-made isolates for study; each capable, in appearance at least, of being readily grasped as a whole.

This makes the Pacific world all the better as a laboratory ... without denying the existence of gaps and complexities, or the fascination of unravelling origins, we can recognise that, since the populations are small and the written history short, we are spared a whole host of variables which confuse the ecology of the great landmasses (Spate 1963, 253-254).

Imaginings of supposedly simple island civilisations, apparently without written history and spatially uncontaminated, denied peoples of Oceania a vision of their world as 'a notably early sphere of human accomplishments, on land and sea, and the ocean more an avenue for interchange than a barrier to human affairs' (Terrell et al. 1997, 156). Islands imagined as laboratories helped to deny islanders of the region a cultural identity as great travellers and navigators (cf. Clifford 2001; Hau'ofa 1993; Jolly 2001) and assisted Western researchers with their positivist aspirations and academic career ambitions. Similarly, Tuvalu imagined as a litmus test for climate change can deny its inhabitants their much more complex identities in climate change discourses. In her anthropological practice in the early twentieth century Margaret Mead was keen to attempt to reproduce laboratory conditions to help understand human behaviour. Finding no suitable communities isolated in both time and space in those that she saw as complicated civilisations, Mead turned to what she assumed were the simple and uncivilised people on the islands of Samoa. She wrote:

For the biologist who doubts an old hypothesis or wishes to test out a new one, there is the biological laboratory. There, under conditions over which he can exercise the most rigid control, he can vary the light, the air, the food, which his plants or his animals receive, from the moment of birth throughout their lifetime. Keeping all the conditions but one constant, he can make accurate measurement of the effect of the one. This is the ideal method of science, the method of the controlled experiment, through which all hypotheses may be submitted to a strict objective test ...

Unfortunately, such ideal methods are denied to us when our materials are humanity and the whole fabric of a social order ... What method, then, is open to us who wish to conduct a human experiment but who lack the power either to construct the experimental conditions or to find controlled examples of those conditions here and there throughout our own civilization? (Mead 1928, 12-13).

Because valid positivist knowledge is tested against certain ideals - whether it is able to be replicated and hence useful for making generalisations - Mead did not only have a modest pursuit of knowledge in mind. She claimed the island not only as a legitimate but also an *ideal* space of positivist knowledge production about human societies. Mead's yearning for an ideal field-site in which she could control knowledge of 'humanity and the whole fabric of a social order' presented populations of supposedly simple civilisations as valid subjects of experimentation in much the same way as animals and plants in a human-made laboratory. Such a representation, acceptable to Mead and her publishers in 1928, is problematic now, when research into human research subjects is only valid if it meets standards of ethical treatment of human subjects.

While it might be strange and arguably unethical to explicitly liken humans to animals and plants as research subjects under laboratory conditions, the space

of such research is not confined to the past. Inhabited islands are still represented as natural laboratories. Iceland is one such example (Greenhough 2006). There, the apparent genetic homogeneity of the population has been used to justify imaginings of Iceland as a natural laboratory in research agendas and practices exploring human genetics. For instance, one research project represented the Icelandic population, contained within a database of de-identified medical records, as research subjects within that laboratory. Far from being a neutral, unproblematic space of scientific endeavour, representations of Iceland as a natural laboratory have been resisted by an Icelandic elite (Greenhough 2006). As scientists became interested in Iceland as an apparently ideal laboratory for the study of human genetics, some of Iceland's intellectuals became uneasy about bioethical implications. It is in this context that Greenhough convincingly argues that those social scientists who study the activities of the geneticists should guard against unthinkingly entering Iceland as a natural laboratory. To fail to do so is to enter the island field-site under the illusion that it is already neutral and fully formed. Opportunities for more critical approaches to islands as field-site can emerge if researchers acknowledge that 'the field sites within which we study science are in turn actively reproduced through our own studies and practices as anthropologists, social scientists, geographers' (Greenhough 2006, 234).

One final important question arises: if islands are natural laboratories, are island inhabitants being imagined, highly disturbingly, as subjects of experimentation, evocative of justified experimentation on islanders as if they were laboratory rats? While such a representation has never, to my

knowledge, been expressly articulated in the published discourses of island research, it could be menacingly *implied* if research agendas and practices uncritically reproduce imaginings of islands as natural laboratories.

Laboratory rats are, even in an age of ethical treatment of laboratory animals, creatures that are expendable in the pursuit of positivist knowledge. The fantasy of, and fascination with, the island laboratory is potentially of very real import for the identity, even if not the physical welfare, of island inhabitants, and is potentially of relevance in the case of Tuvalu as a litmus-test for climate change.

Characteristics of Western islographs

In this section, I use insights drawn from scholarship characterised by the fluid islograph and informed by the limitations underscoring the fascination islograph to draw out two key characteristics of broader Western islographs, beyond the realm of island studies. Tuan has written:

The island seems to have a tenacious hold on the human imagination but it is in the imagination of the Western world that the island has taken the strongest hold (Tuan 1974, 118).

The first characteristic of the Western islograph is that islands are paradoxical space (Baldacchino 2006; Edmond and Smith 2003a; Hay 2006; Polack 2000). Islands seem to be able to function as a 'convenient platform for any whim or fancy' (Baldacchino 2006, 5). Islands can be utopias or dystopias, paradises or prisons, insignificant marginal territories and important, ubiquitous metaphors:

An island can be both paradise and prison, both heaven and hell. Any island, any islander, is a contradiction between 'here' and 'there' ... gripped by negotiating the anxious balance between roots and roots ... like the body, both sustained and yet threatened by incursion ... Islands are paradoxical spaces which lend themselves to smug subordination by different discourses (Baldacchino 2006, 5).

Islands are the most graspable and most slippery of subjects. On the one hand, they are fragments, threatening to vanish beneath rising tides or erupting out of the deep, linked by networks of exchange even as they appear to be emblems of self-sufficiency. Encapsulating both the comfort of finitude and the tease of endless proliferation, islands beg and resist interpretation. They are at once microcosm and excess (Edmond and Smith 2003a, 5).

Island paradoxes are not necessarily self-evident in island representations. Most frequently, only one side of the paradox - such as isolation, or paradise - is visible. Islands are often characterised as *fundamentally* isolated or paradisiacal space. For many, the island is bounded, insular and separate:

[t]he post-Enlightenment figuration of the island has tended to focus on the landform at the expense of the surrounding element: to represent the island as an emblem of singularity. The separateness of islands has offered many discursive possibilities to European cultures. As an example of the apparent power of geography to determine human character it has enabled imaginative writers, scientists, social anthropologists and others to explore that interaction of the individual with their environment which has fascinated Europe since the early modern period ... In a globalised world the idea of the island would seem to have lost much of its traditional resonance. Once there were no more islands to discover, some of their imaginative potential was inevitably lost. In contemporary cultural discourses of the [W]est, islands often

represent sites of cultural stagnation ... Isolation, once conceived of as enabling, has come to be thought of as disabling, damagingly cut off from modernity rather than a utopian alternative to it. Common to both these views is the idea that islands are places out of time ... islands now often express a sense of loss rather than promise (Edmond and Smith 2003a, 8).

Significant here is that although no longer seen as 'essentially hard-edged', islands somehow maintain 'the appearance of hard boundaries and insularity' (Hay 2006, 22-23). In contrast to coastal areas of islands, island interiors and/or inlands receive scant attention. Ostensibly a perspective outward, to elsewhere, the perspective is more correctly understood as being inward, on the role of the coast as separator and boundary. The isolated island becomes inscribed into the coast itself. Despite the fact that truly isolated islands can rarely, if ever, be located on the ground, representations of them are a powerful force. There is a host of fictionalised islands perfectly cut off from the rest of the world. These are, for example, the islands of Robinson Crusoe, Gilligan, the Swiss Family Robinson, Dr Moreau and Prospero. They are the islands from which messages in bottles are cast forth and those of cartoons that depict a stranded individual or two on a tiny slice of land with just one palm tree, in the middle of the ocean. Such island representations are used in a multitude of everyday ways - such as in advertising and the news media. For example:

Think of the thousand cartoons you have seen ... of the marooned human or pair of humans (in whatever combination of sexes) on some microscopic tropical atoll, a little sand, one palm tree, one rock, the vastness of the sea. Humor and pathos live together in these scenes. Here at last, we think, life is cut down to the bone so that

we can see what stuff it is made of ... Do we love this cartoon scene because we imagine we can discover the bedrock of human nature inside it? (Holm 2000, 7).

The second characteristic of the Western islograph is also discernable in the above extract: recall that islands are imaginative geographies - mechanisms of relational identity construction. They can function, again paradoxically, as mirrors of the self and means of identity construction in relation to distant and different others. Mapping human identity *to* island is vitally important in understanding how one side of an island paradox is demoted and yet islands also remain fundamentally paradoxical spaces. The island becomes a geographical expression of human fears of, and desires for, both isolation and connection:

Desert islands offer a prelapsarian space on which it is possible to "get back to nature," to return to an infantile state. The first task of fictional castaways is often to attempt to regulate the environment in which they find themselves ... the castaway reverts to a childlike state of helplessness and abjection before transcending this state to become whole and bounded again ... islands are the perfect metaphoric space in which to trace the vicissitudes of coming into a Western notion of selfhood (Polack 2000, 220).

To explore the role of islands in Western identity formations, I turn to the concept of imaginative geographies described by Edward Said (1978).

Imaginative geographies can be considered to be productions of space that designate familiar spaces as 'ours' and unfamiliar spaces as 'theirs' (Said 1978, 54). Said was specifically concerned with how Western or Occidental knowledge about the Orient or the East was ideologically constitutive of an

unequal relationship between the Occident and the Orient. This unequal relationship was imagined in dramatisations and divisions of distance and difference that projected an inferior Orient in opposition to a superior Occident. Occidentalists were thus able to manage the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, and scientifically.

The Western isograph is characterised by an imaginative geography: a means of hierarchical identity construction in relation to spaces that are apparently distant and different from continental or mainland homes (Said 1978, see also Fry 1997). Gillis' (2004, 1) argument, that 'it is not real islands that are irresistible, but the idea of the island that is the true source of Western islomania' needs to be taken seriously in this context. Greenhough (2004, 151) observes that:

Islands are always linked to the mainland by the gaze of the outsider, the television viewer or scientist. After all, islands would be a meaningless category without continents with which to compare them.

Imaginative geographies are performative. The categories, codes, conventions and landscapes with which a geographic idea is associated over time become a repertoire which shapes the imaginings of those who draw on it (Gregory 2003). Imaginative geographies actively constitute objects such as the Orient, the tropics, or islands and they 'sharpen the spurs of action' in relation to that object (Gregory 2004, 20). Since identity formation is a relational endeavour, those who identified as Occidental could locate their identity in the Orient's reflection: through the projection of their own fears and desires, Occidentalists imagined the Occident as 'rational, developed, humane, superior' while the

Orient was 'aberrant, undeveloped, inferior' (Said 1978, 300). These imaginings enabled the Orient to be positioned as something to fear and/or control. Thus for example in relation to the 'war on terror', the decision to go to war is dependent on how people imagine other people and places (Gregory 2004). While imaginative geographies are performances of space that are scripted, their outcomes are not fully determined. Every 'performance of the ... present carries with it the twin possibilities of either reaffirming and even radicalising the hold of the ... past on the present or undoing its enclosures' (Gregory 2004, 19; Butler 1993). Thus imaginative geographies are useful for demonstrating unequal power relations, and for investigating how such relations might be changed. There may be dominant performances of island space but they are subject to challenge.

Greenhough (2004) suggests that islands, by definition, can be mirrors held up to reveal fears and desires of continental or mainland dwellers. Islands become particular spaces depending on how they are held in a relational gaze. Productions of islands are grounded in assumptions of fundamental difference between island and not-island space. Differences between islands and continents or mainlands are not of horizontal co-equals. Continents or mainlands are the standard by which islands are judged. They are ordinary and everyday space, whereas islands are both fascinating spaces of difference and peripheral to the everyday. Representations of islands as marginal simultaneously produce continental and mainland space as central. In Western discourses, islands have been represented as strange, parochial and inferior spaces in relation to continents (Deloughrey 2001; Garuba 2001; McCall

1994). Continental or mainland individuals and groups, including scholars, may thus be analysed in terms of how they self-identify as normal, sophisticated and superior in island reflections and how they position islands as territory to fear and/or control.

In arguing that the 'defining idea of an island is its boundedness' Edmond and Smith (2003a, 2) also suggest that boundedness 'makes islands graspable, able to be held in the mind's eye and imagined as places of possibility and promise'. When islands are represented as models for larger worlds, for instance, islands are useful as 'the first unit that the mind can pick out and comprehend' (McArthur and Wilson 1967, cited in Baldacchino 2006, 9). D.H. Lawrence once wrote a short story called 'The Man Who Loved Islands' which encapsulates a Western desire for control over island space, and how such desires can be implicated in identity formation:

There was a man who loved islands. He was born on one, but it didn't suit him, as there were too many people on it, besides himself. He wanted an island all of his own: not necessarily to be alone on it, but to make it a world of his own ... An island, if it is big enough, is no better than a continent. It has to be really quite small before it feels like an island; and this story will show how tiny it has to be, before you can presume to fill it with your own personality (Lawrence 1974, 671).

The human body functions as a central, seemingly natural, reference point for mapping out island and Western identities. In Western discourses, large islands inexplicably lose their senses of islandness, indicated by debate on the islandness of large expanses of land such as Australia and Greenland noted in

the previous chapter. On a large island, it is difficult for the human senses to apprehend boundedness. On the other hand, islands that are too small for human habitation are often not labelled as islands. They are merely rocks in the water. It is common in Western representations of what an island *is* for reference to be made to how a human can inhabit an island *and* sense its edges:

Ask anyone to take a sheet of paper and to draw an island as seen from the air. Most likely, that person would draw a stylized image of a piece of land, without much detail other than being surrounded by water. It would fit within the space confines of the sheet. It would, also, have an approximately circular shape (Baldacchino 2005, 247).

The island is defined not just by water surrounding land but by the human body's interactions with island landscapes in comparison to those places that are not island - the corporeal body is limited in the ways it can leave, enter and move around within the island. This close mapping of body to island indicates, as Edmond and Smith (2003a, 4) observe, that a 'dialectic of boundedness and connection allows islands to be related more readily to the human psyche than other geographical configurations'. Beer suggests that:

the tight fit of island to individual to island permits a gratification which may well rely not only on cultural but on pre-cultural sources. The unborn child first experiences itself as surrounded by wetness, held close within the womb. It is not an island in the strict sense since it is attached to a lifeline, an umbilical cord. It becomes insular at birth (Beer 1989, 16).

John Donne's famous line of verse - *no man is an island* - perhaps most clearly demonstrates how islands and identities constructed in their image are fundamentally paradoxical and yet most visibly isolated space. Deriving its charge from the quality of paradox, Donne's metaphor presupposes 'that the individual is *ordinarily* understood to be like an island' (Beer 1990, 271, emphasis added). Wood (2003a, 139) highlights this point by emphasising the 'subversive power of a single comma': no, man is an island. The individual, like an island, appears isolated.

The individual is simultaneously and paradoxically connected to other island selves. The idea of an island conveys much more representational force in Western discourses than its plural cousin, the archipelago. Curiously, while it is unproblematic *per se* to picture an isolated archipelago, the image is somehow oxymoronic. 'Archipelago' speaks quietly of inter-island connections while 'island' speaks loudly of isolation. Indeed, few metaphors convey senses of isolation as cogently as island ones. Donne's line of verse is both appealing and repulsive emotionally precisely because it seems to offer comfort amidst a fear of being isolated, at the same time as denying desires to be autonomous and self-sufficient. Nevertheless, as notions of the insular island are interrogated, the coexistence of the dialectical opposite of the paradox - connections to that which is *not*-island - can become more visible.

Returning to Said's formulation of Orientalism, it has been correctly criticised for reducing the relationship between Occident and Orient to one of domination by an active, homogeneous West over a passive, innocent and

equally homogeneous East. Furthermore, Said's formulation of imaginative geographies fails to acknowledge the myriad resistances against the Occident by the people who populate that space. Power relations comprise pluralities and hybridities of gender, class, religion, ethnicity, scale, and other social and geographic ideas (Clifford 1988; Driver 2004; Fry 1997; Gregory 1995; Tuhiwai Smith 2005). Orientalism, in its original formulation, had a tendency to reproduce the Occident/Orient binary that Said was keen to unsettle. Nevertheless the concept of imaginative geographies, the Western islograph among its manifestations, continues to be of use to empirical researchers in critiqued and modified forms that strive to reformulate and challenge, not reproduce, binary understandings of space. Thus, analyses of power relations constituted by the Western islograph need to assume a great deal more complexity than simple continent or mainland/island hierarchies, and be wary of entrenching problematic power relations:

Islands have a marked individuality, an obstinate separateness, that we like to think corresponds to our own (Edmond and Smith 2003a, 4).

There has emerged in the late twentieth century a rather passionate need on the part of many people to see themselves as different from one another. They may push their separateness and autonomy, their cultural singularity, to the point that no one outside the group and its unique experiences can understand it, much less speak for it.

Peoples and cultures are, in this sense, islands, their insularity both fate and a source of pride (Tuan 1995, 229).

Given the foregoing, unsettling the Western islograph would appear to be important for advancing ethical research. This task is critical for island scholars, and one I pay heed to in analysing representations of Tuvalu.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have addressed the third objective of this research; namely, to describe and review scholarly critiques of island representations. My critical analysis of a range of works within island studies has resulted in the constitution of three different scholarly islographs. The first is the fixed islograph, in which islands are represented as objects in the landscape inscribed with innate meaning and possessing natural boundaries. Islanders are represented as possessing unique island identities and valid island knowledge is derived from the realm of the real. The second is the fluid islograph, in which islands are represented as knowable through power relations. They are understood as political tools, complex spaces with changing, contestable meanings. The third is the fascination islograph, in which islands are deployed emotionally and at times uncritically, often by outsiders, in research agendas and practices.

I have used insights from the scholarly fluid and fascination islographs to draw out two, now familiar, key characteristics of Western islographs as paradoxical spaces and imaginary geographies. I have observed how critical island scholarship is providing useful strategies for investigating islands as paradoxes. Using some of these insights, my analysis of Tuvalu's islographs in Chapters Four, Five and Six - many of which are produced by Westerners -

considers whether and how its islands are paradoxical spaces in climate change discourses. Before commencing that analysis, however, I turn to the fourth objective of this work, which is to provide an overview of key points in Tuvalu's history which will serve as important scaffolding for later chapters.

Chapter 3: Tuvalu

Introduction

The fourth objective of this work is to provide an overview of key events and processes in Tuvalu's past and present. Constituting Tuvalu as a broad and complex space, in this chapter I provide information to contextualise analysis of Tuvalu's climate change isographs in later chapters. This information is useful for understanding how and with what effects Tuvalu has emerged from relative obscurity as 'an outpost of empire so classic that it approaches caricature' (Woodcock 1972 cited in Connell 1980a, 107) to being a 'poster-child' for climate change (Chambers and Chambers 2007, 294). The material offered in this chapter is a partial view of Tuvalu; a montage of different productions of Tuvaluan space, drawing on a range of commentators.

Eight standing together

Tuvalu is located in the central Pacific Ocean north of present-day Fiji, south of Kiribati, and east of the Solomon Islands. Five of the nine islands have been characterised by McLean and Hosking (1991) as true atolls, with peripheral ring-shaped reefs surrounding lagoons. These are Funafuti, Nanumea, Nui, Nukufetau and Nukulaelae. Three islands, Nanumaga, Niulakita and Niutao, are of reef patch form, with small land-enclosed ponds and land areas that cover large portions of the available reef platform. The remaining island, Vaitupu, has composite characteristics of the atoll and reef patch forms. According to McLean and Hosking (1991) the smallest Tuvalu

island, Niulakita, is 0.4 square kilometres and the largest island, Vaitupu, is 5.7 square kilometres. The maximum elevation of all the islands is approximately four to five metres. Funafuti was 'the centre of world-wide attention, at least for the small but prestigious scientific community' (Connell 1980a, 105) when, at the turn of the twentieth century, Professor Edgeworth David led a Royal Society expedition there to test, and subsequently prove, Charles Darwin's theory of atoll formation. This theory posits that coral atolls are formed by the subsiding of oceanic volcanoes, with coral building up along their rim.²⁷

Before the islands came into existence, the ocean where they are located was inhabited by *te Pusi mo te Ali*, the Eel and the Flounder. Today, these two animals are the title characters in the most widely told story of the creation of Tuvalu. On Funafuti and Vaitupu, the founding ancestor is said to be a Samoan giant called Telematua (O'Brien 1983). Nanumea is said to have been made by two women, Pai and Vau, who nurtured a barren sand-bank to support life (Chambers 1984b; O'Brien 1983). Nanumeans also say a part human, part spirit called Tefolaha from Tonga, or perhaps Samoa, was the founder of their island (Chambers and Chambers 2002; O'Brien 1983). These navigators arrived on the islands up to 2000 years ago. Subsequent arrivals from Tokelau, the Cook Islands, Futuna and Rotuma are also likely. On Nui,

²⁷ Reports from 'three coral reef boring expeditions mounted by the Royal Society in 1896, and a fourth visit by Professor Agassiz of Harvard in 1899 ... along with reports on collections of the flora and fauna, served to make the natural history of [Funafuti] atoll the best documented of any in the Pacific and Indian Oceans at the turn of the century' (Rodgers and Cantrell 1988, 1). These authors note that little was known of the other islands in the Ellice group at the time, and that 'following the intense activity of the last four years of the nineteenth century, much of the world's scientific community lost interest in this remote and tiny group' (Rodgers and Cantrell 1988, 2).

people from Kiribati also settled. The people of Nui today speak a language closely related to the Gilbertese language spoken in Kiribati. On Tuvalu's other islands, dialects of Tuvaluan are spoken which are unrelated to Gilbertese.

Human habitation of all the islands was only possible due to efforts by settlers to grow food and sink wells to the only sources of fresh water - narrow subterranean lenses. It is likely that people relied initially on the tough pandanus plant for sustenance before vegetation such as coconuts could be introduced (Macdonald 1982). Coconut was a staple and remains a very important crop, well suited to the sandy soils and coral debris that comprise the land of atolls. It is more readily available in times of drought than other food sources, is considered more reliable than fish stocks, and is used in many ways in atoll diets. Non-perishable food such as dried fish could also be stored for use in times of scarcity. Fish from lagoons, reefs and ocean waters, and root crops such as *pulaka* grown in the sandy soils, were and remain important sources of food (Iese 2005; Macdonald 1982). *Pulaka* is grown in deep pits in Tuvalu's coralline soils.

Understandings of belief systems and social organisation in the archipelago before contact with non-Oceanic people are scant (Besnier 1995). However, there was likely to have been:

a loosely hierarchical social structure headed by a chief, selected from among the members of one particular clan or kin group, who ruled in conjunction with some sort of a council, probably made up of the heads of kin groups (Besnier 1995, 37).

According to Munro (1990a), before significant contact with non-Oceanic people, each of the Tuvalu islands was politically and economically autonomous. The islands shared a similar resource base so trading was limited. Voyages between the Tuvalu islands used to occur by large sailing outrigger canoes. Venturing beyond the Tuvalu archipelago in such vessels was not common, although sporadic contact was likely to have been made with other Oceanic peoples from Kiribati, Rotuma, Tonga, Samoa, Futuna, Uvea and Tokelau. Ocean voyages, even between islands, were risky and required excellent navigational skills (Besnier 1995). Interaction between island communities was influenced more by ceremonial and social functions. The interface between land and water, for example, was once a site of ceremony for visitors, as is recounted by Captain Pease who visited Nanumea in 1853:

The stranger is required to stop at the water's edge five or six hours when the King and all head chiefs are engaged in religious ceremonies and consultations to intercede with their deities that the stranger may prove good friends, that no calamities may come upon their people in consequence of their strange arrival (Pease 1853, cited in Connell 1980a, 104).

The first recorded non-Oceanic visitor to the Tuvalu islands was Spaniard Alvaro de Mendana. He named one of the islands (probably Nui²⁸) Isla de Jesus on 15th January 1568. He returned to the vicinity of Niulakita in 1595 (Besnier 1995), naming it La Solitaria (Connell 1980a). Only two European

²⁸ Koch (1961) considers that it was Nukufetau, and not Nui, which was the island in question.

ships are reported to have visited the islands between 1595 and 1819. Neither of these ships stayed long or had substantial contact with their inhabitants. In 1819, the Dutch explorer Arent Schuyler de Peyster gave the name Ellice's Group to Funafuti atoll after an English Member of Parliament, Edward Ellice, his patron and owner of the cargo on board his ship (Connell 1980a). The same name was extended to the group of nine islands in 1841 (Finin 2002). From the early 1820s, the sea brought whalers and beachcombers in casual and irregular contact with Tuvaluans that resulted in a small amount of trade (Munro 1990a). In the 1860s, slave traders, or 'blackbirders' from Central America abducted large numbers of islanders who were taken away as slaves and did not return (Finin 2002). Two thirds of the population of Nukulaelae was lost in one such abduction (Munro et al. 1991).

The first Europeans to the islands found that mapping them was an undertaking fraught with difficulty and uncertainty. Islands thought to be 'undiscovered' - unmapped by Europeans - were later found to have been already 'discovered' by another explorer. A mysterious island called Gran Cocal, for instance, was inaccurately mapped and might have been Nanumaga or Niutao (Chambers and Munro 1980). However, once mapping coordinates for each of the islands were established and the archipelago named, the nine islands were stabilised in Western discourses as constituting a natural grouping. This identification was assisted by the fact that the nine islands are proximate, running in a chain from the south-east to the north-west, and located away from other island groups of Oceania. Notwithstanding Niulakita being originally uninhabited and the people of Nui speaking a different

language to the inhabitants of the other islands, or that different dialects are spoken throughout, Europeans tended to assume that linguistic and cultural similarities observed throughout the archipelago are sufficient to designate and identify its inhabitants as an homogeneous group, the Ellice Islanders. They are commonly distinguished from 'Micronesian' inhabitants of the Gilbert Islands to the north. Accounts of early visits by Europeans to the islands indicate that their smallness, remoteness and few natural resources were of little colonial interest, at least until the British found it strategically useful to colonise them towards the end of the nineteenth century:

Tuvaluan atolls had been discovered by accident ... they provoked little or no interest in their discoverers (Connell 1980a, 104).

The probable autonomy of Tuvalu's island communities following settlement by Oceanic sea-farers, and before colonisation, belies the meaning of the word 'Tuvalu', meaning 'eight together' or 'eight standing together' (Cannon 2006). Its origins are uncertain, but it seems possible, if not probable, that 'Tuvalu' is a word that gained significance only after contact with non-Oceanic peoples. *Tu* means 'to stand' and *valu* means eight. The name Tuvalu draws on an identity based on shared senses of competition and cooperation between and among the communities of eight of nine islands in the archipelago - all except Niulakita.²⁹ One's island *and* the community of that island are known as *fenua*. It is in relation to their *fenua* that a Tuvaluan person draws a strong sense of identity. These links to kin and land define 'a

²⁹ Thus the eight islands and their communities are Funafuti, Nanumea, Nanumaga, Niutao, Nui, Nukufetau, Nukulaelae and Vaitupu. Colonial authorities designated that Niulakita be settled by inhabitants of Niutao (Goldsmith 2002). The inhabitants of Niulakita constitute part of Niutao's *fenua*.

supreme identification with the island on which both are to be found' (Macdonald 1982, 275). Significance is attached to solidarity with one's island community and advancing community over individual interests (Munro 1990b; Munro and Munro 1985). *Fenua* identities have tended to be subjugated by designating a culturally homogeneous Ellice Islander or Tuvaluan people.

Yet national identity is also of contemporary importance to island inhabitants, being described by one Tuvaluan scholar as follows:

Today ... to most Tuvaluans the name Tuvalu meant more than just the words "TU" and "VALU" put together ... it represents everything that Tuvalu naturally have [sic]. This includes also Niulakita ... But further than that, Tuvalu is understood to include traditional culture, people and everything else one can find in Tuvalu (Paalo 1981, np).

Another scholar describes the importance of a national culture in maintaining identity and autonomy on the world stage:

It can be argued that culture is the only "possession" Tuvaluans have, for it is their language, traditional knowledge and rituals that keep Tuvaluans bonded together and recognised by other nations (Niuatui 1991, 32).

Nevertheless, national identity in Tuvalu can only be fully understood with reference to the significance of the *fenua* and competition and cooperation

between and among the island communities.³⁰ The word 'Tuvalu' itself encapsulates this significance. The word may have found its initial spark of existence at the insistence of Donald Kennedy, an administrator, teacher and amateur anthropologist from New Zealand who lived in the Ellice Islands between the first and second world wars. A possibly pivotal event is recounted as follows (Paalo 1981). Kennedy insisted that a group of boys who were assisting Kennedy to conduct fieldwork sit together and discuss a meaningful indigenous name for the Ellice Islands. 'Tuvalu' is what they agreed on, a word that reflected the importance of the eight *fenua*. The veracity of this account notwithstanding, the name *Atu Tuvalu* - cluster of eight - was considered 'native' by a European only a few decades later (Roberts 1958). Furthermore, that the word Tuvalu is a recent creation is in dispute. Some record the name for Tuvalu *before* European contact as *Te Atu Tuvalu* - archipelago of eight or eight standing together - suggesting a long-standing collective identity (Connell 1980a).³¹ Whatever the origins of the word Tuvalu, it was legally and popularly recognised with the declaration of independence from Britain on 1st October 1978 (Paalo 1981).

³⁰ *Fenua* and national identities also overlap and co-exist with other social groupings such as households, clans, and village 'sides' (Besnier 1995). Nanumaga youth, for instance, sport t-shirts declaring multiple identities, translated as '100% Nanumagan Youth, 99% Nanumagan, 98% Tuvaluan'.

³¹ It is national identity that is most frequently used by outsiders to represent Tuvaluan people, particularly in development and media discourses. Anthropological, ethno-biological and some historical discourses, however, are important exceptions. Work in these fields tends to focus on a particular island community. For example, see Besnier (1989; 1991; 1993; 1994a; 1994b) on Nukulaelae; Chambers (1975; 1984a; 1983) on Nanumea; Finikaso (2005) on Vaitupu and Funafuti; White (1965) on the Vaitupu community on the Fijian island of Kioa; and Noricks (1981; 1983) and Sogivalu (1992) on Niutao. Goldsmith (1985; 1989) and Kofe (1976) focussed their studies of the Tuvaluan National Church at a national level and Paalo (1981) focussed on national symbolism. Koch (1961) attempted to document the material culture of Tuvalu as a whole. Macdonald (1971; 1975; 1982) wrote on the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. Munro et. al (1991) and Isala and Munro (1987) wrote histories of Nukulaelae and Vaitupu respectively. The latter two were published in Tuvaluan, and were produced not solely for an academic audience, but also for the people of the community being studied.

Elekana's legacy

In 1865, the London Missionary Society (LMS) sent Samoan missionaries to Tuvalu and the Christianisation of the islands commenced. The first missionary to arrive was named Elekana. By the turn of the century, conversion to Christianity among the population was almost universal. Many social changes followed. One of the most significant legacies of Christianity's spread throughout the islands in the second half of the nineteenth century was the associated introduction of literacy and education (Besnier 1995; Paalo 1981).

There were also other changes. Consolidation of island populations into a single village was implemented by Samoan pastors and later by British colonial authorities (Besnier 1995). Previously, communities were dispersed in kin-based hamlets throughout the islands, at least according to research on Nukulaelae and Nanumea (Besnier 1995; Chambers 1984b). Christianity prompted the suppression of practices such as polygamy, abortion and infanticide, the latter two used as a means of population control in preference to migration (Paalo 1981)³². Such practices were vigorously discouraged by missionaries (Connell 1999). It has been difficult for scholars to estimate the population of Tuvalu in early years of European contact (Bedford et al. 1980; Connell 1999). However, in 1876, the population was under 2500 and had grown to over 3500 by the end of the century. Christianity also prompted increased need for cash, to offer as payment to missionaries and as donations

³² Paalo (1981) writes of a pre-Christianity penalty for murder or continued anti-social behaviour uncurbed by other punishment. Called *fakafolau*, the penalty involved exile: putting the punished person in a canoe and telling them never to return to the island.

to the LMS (Besnier 1995; Finin 2002). Connell (1980a) reports that most copra (dried coconut) and coconut oil from the islands then sold to traders was supplied by pastors, who had collected it as islanders' contributions to the welfare of the church. Thus little trade revenue was received by islanders themselves.

Munro et al. (1991, 32) argue that the coming of Christianity to Nukulaelae was indirectly responsible for two disasters for the community there, although it should be noted that conversion is perceived favourably by many of Tuvalu's contemporary population. The first of these disasters was Peruvian slave trader abductions. Peruvian slave traders enticed all the able-bodied men and many women of the island aboard their ship by inviting the people to receive the holy sacrament there. The islanders had refused earlier financial lures to go aboard. The second disaster was the leasing of an islet of Nukulaelae as a plantation to German traders. Inhabited atolls generally made poor sites for European plantation efforts, due to insufficient space and fragmented land tenures. However, the depleted population at Nukulaelae following the Peruvian raid provided a favourable opportunity for a German captain to negotiate a lease for a copra plantation with the island's survivors. The terms of the lease were disputed by the islanders when the plantation was established, and for most of the 25 years that the Germans were there, their presence was felt to be a detrimental one (Munro et al. 1991).

Empire's periphery

The British claimed the Ellice Islands and the Gilbert Islands to the north in order to fend off German colonial ambitions in the region (Macdonald 1971), and the islands became a British Protectorate in 1896. In 1916, a Crown Colony was formed. Together the two island groups formed the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. When the Protectorate was established, 'the colonial impact was necessarily slow; this was the periphery of the British Empire' (Connell 1980a, 107). Koch, writing in 1961 in an anthropological account of Tuvalu that was translated into English in 1984, stated:

The atolls offer so little inducement for settlement or trade that they have only recently come under the influence of the white man [sic] and even then not to any great extent (Koch 1961, 12).

The colonial administrative presence on the Ellice Islands was skeletal (Besnier 1995). There was a colony District Officer in Funafuti, but the Colony's headquarters was on Tarawa in the Gilberts. Pastors and indigenous chiefs remained primary sources of authority until colonial Island Councils were established in the 1960s (Finin 2002). It was 'an unpromising start to the Empire, a reluctant colonisation' (Connell 1980a, 107).

The islands' lack of wealth as gauged by Europeans meant that neither settlement nor trade were developed as intensively there as in other colonised parts of Oceania (Besnier 1995; Munro and Munro 1985). Nevertheless, significant changes were imposed by colonial authorities. Ocean-going

navigational skills were mostly lost, for example, because the colonial administration forbade long-distance navigation from 1890s onwards (Besnier 1995). Demand for copra in the 1870s attracted commercial operations and the first regular trade links were established with world markets. Connell (1980a, 105) records that while slave trade abductions 'gave way to more controlled labour movements, to the plantations of Tahiti, Fiji, Hawaii, Samoa and Queensland' such movement ended in 1885 'when restrictions by the British and Queensland Governments brought an end to long-distance labour migration from Tuvalu.' Tuvaluans, however, started to work as crew members on commercial ships, an occupation that continues to contribute significantly to the contemporary Tuvaluan economy (Finin 2002).

In World War II, the Gilbert Islands were occupied by the Japanese, and the Ellice Islands were used as a base by American troops, who built air-strips and brought new technological awareness and consumer products to the inhabitants (McQuarrie 1994). While Koch (1961) considered that both World Wars passed Tuvalu without leaving noticeable impact, other accounts differ. Finin (2002, 11) writes that along with airfields being built on Funafuti, Nukufetau and Nanumea, 'heavy equipment dredged lagoons and cleared large swaths of real estate'. According to Macdonald (1982, 143) the war-time experience 'led to a re-ordering of Islanders' perceptions of the world and of their own place in it.'

In the 1960s, political activity which culminated in a declaration of independence for Tuvalu commenced, mobilised by an Ellice Islander elite

and marked by a series of manoeuvres also involving the British and the Gilbertese. Taking into account world-wide trends towards decolonisation, Ellice Islanders foresaw their future as a disempowered and subjugated minority if a decolonisation process for the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony led to a new nation state that maintained their union with the Gilbertese.³³ Independence was sought by Ellice Islanders with the distinct purpose of protecting what they described as a unique cultural identity from the rising power of Gilbertese majority interests.³⁴ The Gilbertese Chief Elected Member took the position that 'if the Ellice Islanders were not prepared to accept the inevitability of Gilbertese majority rule, then it was up to them to do something about it' (Macdonald 1975, 34).

A nation state to protect Ellice Islanders from collective cultural subjugation is explained in the following extract:

The force which above all compelled [the Tuvaluans] to argue so forcefully and so stubbornly for separation was their concern that with the departure of the British they would be left at the mercy of the i-Kiribati. British government officials who visited [the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony] on fact-finding missions about Tuvaluan

³³Tuvalu is outside the Pacific Ocean's tropical cyclone belt and they strike there only rarely. A devastating tropical cyclone, Hurricane Bebe, struck Funafuti in 1972. Six people were killed, 700 residents were left homeless and extensive damage occurred to property and agriculture (Brady 1978; Fitchett 1987). Studying socio-ecological resilience in the wake of Hurricane Bebe, Brady considered that the capacity of islanders to survive the cyclone was 'increased by local connections to Britain's industrial resources, and specifically by the mode through which these relationships have been incorporated into the islanders' culture pool' (Brady 1978, 247).

³⁴The Gilbertese had been politically active in the 1960s in promoting their own interests, and there had been some pressure to advocate separation from the Ellice Islands during that time. Macdonald (1975, 34-35) notes that 'the Ellice Islanders ... have been made to appear as the initiators of separation and this interpretation has been given greater currency by the "sweet reasonableness" approach of the Gilbertese leaders who have adhered to their position - also clarified in the late 1960s - that the future of the Ellice Islands was for Ellice Islanders to decide.'

demands for separation were informed of this but did not understand it and consequently paid little attention to it ... The UN mission which witnessed voting during the referendum on six of the Tuvalu Islands heard of it but they too understood little of the people's feelings in this regard. It was for this very reason that outsiders failed to understand why Tuvaluans voted so overwhelmingly for separation when they knew that the conditions governing it were certainly not in their favour (Isala 1983, 160) .

In a referendum observed by United Nations officials, the Ellice Islanders voted in favour of independence, despite widely circulated misgivings from British authorities that the new Tuvalu would have an extremely difficult economic future as an independent nation state. Tuvalu's viability as an independent sovereignty was considered to be untenable by many outsiders, before and after independence; its people likely to rely forever on foreign aid. For example:

Under the impulse of economic insanity the Ellices will demand their freedom from the Gilbertese and end up as the most precarious of all the world's new nations (Ellice District Commissioner 1972, quoted in Connell 1980a, 107).

The islands of Tuvalu were so isolated, and their people so little in contact with the outside world, that the [negative] implications of their [independence] situation in the longer term, however carefully explained, could hardly have been comprehended by the great majority (Fisk and Mellor 1986, 21).

All the evidence suggests that the serious development problems experienced in ... Tuvalu cannot adequately be met by internal policies, or regional cooperation, and that higher levels of aid will only marginally contribute to economic growth (as opposed to improved welfare) (Connell 1986, 70).

Tuvalu is a poor country ... The poverty of Tuvalu is due more to lack of resources capable of development than to a lack of development action (Fisk and Mellor 1986, 2).

Tuvalu shows an ambitious determination ... to promote economic development. In this, it faces formidable problems in the natural resource and transport fields not to mention economic and social areas. The highly restricted range of natural resources and geographical isolation are particularly powerful constraints and severely limit the range of development options that are available (Tisdell and Fairbairn 1983, 357).

The appeal to primordial roots of identity can defy all efforts, whether they be carrot or stick, to persuade a determined community to consider a larger constitutional solution. The then 6000 Ellice islanders ... resisted the heavy-handed package of bribes³⁵ and threats from Great Britain, and voted overwhelmingly to choose a separate constitutional development from the Gilbert islanders with whom they had been linked in the long colonial experience ... Separate ethnicity and the perceived need to affirm and protect a distinct language and culture, prevailed over all other considerations. Against all odds and against conventional wisdom they eventually chose independence and now engage the international system as the sovereign island state of Tuvalu (Bartmann 2000, 42-43).

Bartmann's 'conventional wisdom' may be interpreted as a neoclassical economic assumption that modernisation under a Western model is a universal aspiration and an appropriate benchmark against which to measure claims to nation state status. Island characteristics - limited agricultural potential, small land area, and distance from major markets - are drawn on to

³⁵ The suggestion that bribes were paid is probably false (Isala 2006).

construct Tuvalu's economic destiny as 'naturally' limited in scope. Human ingenuity and innovation, even if diligently applied, can (apparently) do nothing to overcome the 'facts' of islandness in economic development. The isolated small island in this type of discourse functions as a prison of dependency, a characterisation that depends on assumed fundamental differences between Tuvalu and an idealised modern Western nation state. Tuvalu's existence as a sovereign state is represented at best, as an intriguing oddity, and, at worst, an utter nuisance:

As a fully-fledged member of the community of independent nations, Tuvalu is accustomed to being regarded as being something of a curiosity and a cause for pessimism (Anonymous 1994, 8).

This type of belittlement of Oceania countries, even by often well-meaning social scientists, is a characteristic feature of how Oceania is perceived among some policy makers and politicians in larger neighbour states (Fry 1997; Hau'ofa 1993).

Independence occurred in two formal steps: first, in 1975, the Ellice Islands were separated from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony and a new British colony named 'Tuvalu' was created; second, Tuvalu became an independent sovereign state in 1978. In his first speech on the day of independence, the first Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Toaripi Lauti, stated:

Independence for Tuvalu means freedom to decide and develop in accordance with the wish and aspiration of Tuvaluans ... a challenge for Tuvaluans whether we can

recover the happiness that our forefathers have [sic] before they came under the British rule (Lauti 1978 cited in Paalo 1981, np).

Enele Sopoaga, who has since served as Tuvalu's ambassador to the United Nations, wrote in a book of Tuvalu's history shortly after independence:

Becoming independent is an important achievement for any country. It is a formal, public sign that the new nation is equal in dignity, if not in power or wealth, to any other nation on earth, and that the human worth of its citizens is equal to that of other people ... With nations, as with individuals, self-respect and maturity require that they should take responsibility for running their own affairs, even to the point of being free to make their own mistakes (Sopoaga 1983, 178).

Among the Tuvaluan population, independence was regarded variously with fear and hope:

The pessimists believed that Tuvalu is not quite ready for independence; economically, it can become much worse ... they felt that the country could have a bad government with no authority to keep check ... To the optimists on the other hand independence means liberation from the heavy yoke of colonialism (Paalo 1981, np).

Eight years after independence, the Tuvaluan Parliament enacted a new Constitution which reaffirmed commitment to protecting Tuvaluan culture and values, and recognised that these are in constant flux (Levine 1992):³⁶

³⁶An earlier Constitution had been approved in 1978 during the transition to independence. Levine (1992, 492, cf Paalo 1981) describes this document as being 'in style and substance largely of British inspiration' whereas the Constitution of 1986 'reflects a fully sovereign entity's second thoughts, shaped by experience moulding introduced institutions to

While believing that Tuvalu must take its rightful place amongst the community of nations in search of peace and the general welfare, nevertheless the people of Tuvalu recognise and affirm, with gratitude to God, that the stability of Tuvaluan society and the happiness and welfare of the people of Tuvalu, both present and future, depend very largely on *the maintenance of Tuvaluan values, culture and tradition, including the vitality and the sense of identity of island communities* and attitudes of co-operation, self-help and unity within and amongst those communities (The Constitution of Tuvalu, Principles of the Constitution (Section 3), emphasis added).

Nevertheless, the people of Tuvalu recognise that in a changing world, and with changing needs, these principles and values, and the manner and form of their expression (especially in legal and administrative matters) will gradually change, and the Constitution not only must recognise their fundamental importance to the life of Tuvalu but also must not unnecessarily hamper their expression and their development (The Constitution of Tuvalu, Principles of the Constitution (Section 7)).

In 2006, I was present at Tuvalu's Independence Day celebrations. As might be expected on such an occasion, the Prime Minister made a speech that emphasised reflection on, and affirmation of, the importance of independence:

Today is a day of joy to us all which we must share with the world. It is the day that marks and reminds us of our independence from the old era of colonial system under Britain ... we ought to celebrate with joy this occasion because we have parted with the old system of governing that is not so compatible with our way of life, our culture and traditions, and our Tuvaluan language. We should be happy now as our leadership is from us Tuvaluans and the system of governing is one that Tuvaluans have chosen. A question that we should ponder upon at this stage is that: Is

indigenous circumstances,' its phrasings resonating 'more closely with Tuvalu's values and nationalism than with Western concepts of individual entitlement'.

independence of benefit to us or not? In our celebration of our Independence, we are also reminded of the changes in the status of Tuvalu as a nation in terms of its wealth, changes in the way of life of its people, changes in our culture and traditions, as well as changes in our climate (Ielemia 2006, np).

Contemporary Tuvalu

The most recent national census in Tuvalu, conducted in 2002, puts the islands' total enumerated population at 9,561 of which 4,492 are on Funafuti (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2005a). These figures include visitors but not people temporarily absent from Tuvalu. That the population is fairly mobile, however, is something that needs to be taken into account. While 73 per cent of the resident population six years and older had lived at their current address for five years before the 2002 census, 14 per cent had lived on a different island and 13 per cent had lived overseas. Twenty per cent of Funafuti residents had lived overseas five years before the census. Also, during the five year period before the census, Funafuti's population had only a slight net gain of 69 people from the outer islands. Yet some 473 people moved from the outer islands to Funafuti, and 404 people moved from Funafuti to the outer islands. Twenty per cent of Tuvaluan residents were born overseas, but less than two per cent are of foreign descent (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2005a; 2005b). Between 1991 and 2002, the difference between the natural increase of the population and the total population growth indicated that 1082 more Tuvalu residents left than arrived during that period. Fifty eight per cent of these were younger than 19 years of age and a further 34 per cent were aged between 30 and 59 years. It thus appears that families

are leaving Tuvalu and that young people are leaving to further their education and/or seek work overseas (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2005b):

Tuvalu's low population increase during the period 1991-2002 was mainly due to high levels of net-migration. If the current threat of sea level rise prevails, this trend will most likely continue in the near future ... Overseas destinations may be seen as lands of opportunity, with education and employment being the main incentives that entice Tuvaluans to their shores. A move may also be seen as a sign of progress and a means of bettering oneself (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2005b, 44).

From this statistical picture it is evident that moves to a different island or overseas for personal, clan or community betterment are often impermanent. Many Tuvaluans who have lived abroad, even for many years, move back to Tuvalu if educational or employment goals that led them elsewhere have been met, or if life circumstances and family needs change. To service these and less lengthy movements, one of two inter-island vessels visits the islands about once a month, transporting passengers and cargo. Only Funafuti has an airstrip and international airport, with flights between Tuvalu and Fiji usually scheduled twice a week. The inter-island vessels also make journeys to Fiji that are more significantly more affordable than airfares, and on rare occasions have gone further afield, to Nauru and New Zealand.

Tuvaluans tend to maintain strong links to their *fenua* wherever they happen to be in the world, often forming new segments of their island communities away from the home island, and maintaining links with *fenua* members in

different locations. Tuvaluan connections to their family and *fenua* are understood in terms of taking care of socio-spatial relationships even across vast geographic distances. Besnier (1993), for instance, describes the significance of links between the community on Nukulaelae island itself and the community of workers from Nukulaelae living on Nauru³⁷:

Nukulaelae people on Nauru organize themselves as a ... community of a dozen or two individuals ... a miniature replica of the *fenua* "atoll community" back home ... The very purpose of Nukulaelae people being on Nauru is to procure cash for the *fenua*, for their kin groups, and for themselves (Besnier 1993, 189).³⁸

Linkages include community leadership as well as economic support such as remittances. In the 1940s, residents of Vaitupu purchased a small Fijian island called Kioa, where a population of Vaitupu people live permanently.

Although Kioa is within Fijian territory and is paid negligible policy attention by the Tuvaluan national Government, its inhabitants maintain political, economic and kinship links with the Vaitupu *fenua* on Funafuti and Vaitupu itself (White 1965). Indeed, Kioa has been suggested by members of the Vaitupu community as a possible relocation site for Tuvaluan communities following sea level rise (Noa et al. nd). Chambers and Chambers (2002, 156) have described the unity of the Nanumean community on and off island as 'the context within which the ongoing challenges and dialectics of community life are acted out.'

³⁷ With the winding down of phosphate mining on Nauru, there are few Tuvaluans remaining there. At least several dozen returned to Tuvalu in 2006.

³⁸ Besnier also notes that: 'Nukulaelae people on Nauru are frequently under enormous pressure to hand over the fruits of their labours to relatives and to the atoll community and often express their discontent about the dearth of gratitude they receive in return' (Besnier 1993, 189).

Villages on each island are grouped around important structures. These are the church (Besnier 1995) and the meeting hall - *falekaupule* or *maneapa* (the latter a word of Gilbertese origins according to Goldsmith (1989)). The word *falekaupule* refers to both a system of island chiefs and a large community house in the centre of a village, the location for events of significance to the community (Besnier 1995). There, community-wide functions are held, as are meetings. The *falekaupule* system dominates island politics. Customary leadership is represented in this system, which influences national policy decisions significantly (Taafaki and Oh 1995). Community activities, such as building a *falekaupule* and associated fund raising are attached considerable significance (Pasefika 1990). Indeed, those who do not meet with community expectations often receive disapproval from others. Although colonial Island Councils were responsible for relations between an island community and the central British government, their prestige and authority, never fully embraced, decreased significantly following independence. Power struggles ensued between them and the *falekaupule* of each *fenua* (Besnier 1995; Seluka 2002). The conflict between the two governance groups was 'a major factor that contributed to 'rampant inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of rural development programmes' (Seluka 2002, 42). The Falekaupule Act of 1997 awarded powers held by the Island Councils to the *falekaupule*. The Island Councils were renamed *kaupule* and became the executive arm of the *falekaupule* under the Act. This change in governance was, Seluka (2002, 40) noted, a 'revitalisation of the roles and functions of traditional forms in the sphere of local governance in Tuvalu'.

Social life differs across islands. For example, each island community has its own annual festivities in addition to public holidays, such as the remembrance of Hurricane Bebe on Funafuti (Pasefika 1990) and the remembrance of the end of the German plantation lease on Nukulaelae (Munro et al. 1991). On Nanumea, there is concern for the continuation of *tuu Nanumea* - Nanumean customs (Chambers and Chambers 2002). A project was begun in the early 1990s to compile a *fakavae* - a cultural constitution - that highlighted the unique customs of Nanumea. As inter-island migration increases Funafuti's population, members of the Nanumean community there retain close links to Nanumeans on the home island. The '*Nanafuti*' - Nanumeans on Funafuti - have their own political and organisational structure, working closely with the home community to achieve Nanumean goals, among them to advance Nanumean interests at the national level (Chambers and Chambers 2002). Concern with *tuu Nanumea* has arisen most strongly among those Nanumeans who have worked abroad or in Funafuti (Chambers and Chambers 2002).

Christianity was, and continues to be, a major influence on Tuvaluan affairs at all levels of social organisation (Finin 2002; Goldsmith and Munro 1992; Goldsmith 1989). The *Ekalesia Kelisiano o Tuvalu* (EKT) - Tuvalu Church - is an important institution (Goldsmith 1989). The EKT is a Protestant Congregationalist denomination which originated as a branch of the LMS and is now an autonomous national religion (Goldsmith 1985). While not enshrined in Tuvalu's Constitution as part of Government, the Constitution does state that the 'people of Tuvalu desire to constitute themselves as an

Independent State based on Christian principles, the Rule of Law, and Tuvaluan custom and tradition' (The Constitution of Tuvalu, Preamble). The percentage of the national population belonging to the EKT is large, with 91 per cent of the population affiliated with it according to the 2002 Census (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2005a). However, other churches such as Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witness and Baha'i have a 'significance greater than their actual numbers would suggest' (Goldsmith 1985, 154). There are also Muslim, Catholic, Brethren and Assemblies of God congregations. Membership among at least some of these other churches appears to be growing.³⁹ Concerns have been raised about a lack of religious tolerance (Chambers 1984a; Levine 1992), with non-EKT community members being ostracized and even vilified⁴⁰. Pre-Christian customs co-exist and evolve with Christianity and other religions, in a sometimes uneasy but often symbiotic relationship. Besnier (1993), for instance, describes complex social forces influencing sorcery on Nukulaelae. Sorcery is underplayed with pressure from Christian authority and government and yet it is both brought to the fore and discredited in every-day life (Besnier 1993). The practice of 'local medicine', for instance, is a source of consternation for practitioners of

³⁹ Besnier (1994b) writes of conversions on Nukulaelae as follows:

Religious conversion is highly significant, in that until recently all Nukulaelae islanders adhered to the ... [EKT]. Since the early 1980s, a few individuals have either become Jehovah's Witnesses or converted to the Baha'i faith. Leaving the congregation to which everyone else belongs is considered an act of extraordinary boldness in Nukulaelae society, which constantly stresses communal action, unity of purpose, and oneness of spirit in all arenas of social life (Besnier 1994b, 11).

⁴⁰ Paalo (1981, np) reports that there is tension 'shared by members of the Tuvalu Church toward those who joined [other religions] and vice versa.' Besnier (1994b, 12) reports that a married couple on Nukulaelae, who were the only Baha'i on the atoll, were 'marginalised from exchange networks and eventually became the victims of constant microscopic forms of harassment'. A Brethren pastor was stoned on the island of Nanumaga in 2005, an act of violence authorized by community leaders heard in the case *Teonea v Pule o Kaupule o Nanumaga and Nanumaga Kaupule* (2005).

Western medicine at the Princess Margaret Hospital on Funafuti, where patients are often taken only after extensive treatment by 'local doctors' has failed. However,

there is a continuum between "local" medical practices and sorcery performed for malevolent ends, with the moral value of the practitioner's intentions, rather than the means employed, being the distinguishing factor (Besnier 1993, 191).

Subsistence agriculture and fishing play significant roles in the everyday life of the majority of Tuvaluans (Pulea and Farrier 1994), either in terms of production or consumption or both. Land is both highly valued and under threat from increasing population, economic development and environmental pressure (Leupena and Lutelu 1987; Pulea and Farrier 1994). The legacy of American activity on Funafuti during World War II is profound. The 'borrow pits', excavated sections of the island which were left as holes when material was used to build the air-strip, remain a blight on the health of the people who live nearby. They are mostly filled with waste, some of it hazardous. Furthermore, significant geomorphological change has been attributed to the war-time activities of the Americans following the construction of the airfield (Yamano et al. 2007). But land use problems go back even further. Pulea and Farrier (1994) note that there were no land use planning laws to regulate and control development of land use, buildings and business ventures during the colonial period. 'Concern over the coastal environment is not new', particularly 'erosion on the foreshore ... sand and coral dredging, the lack of sea wall protection in certain exposed areas, development projects sited close to the shoreline and coastal pollution' (Pulea and Farrier 1994).

At the national level, Tuvalu has a modified Westminster system of government. The British Head of State is the Tuvalu Head of State, and is represented by a Tuvaluan Governor-General. A twelve member Parliament elects a Prime Minister. Parliament meets two or three times a year for five days at a time. Taafaki and Oh (1995) see Tuvaluan Government as a form of direct democracy where leaders, including the Prime Minister, are accessible. Information about government activity is widely disseminated informally on what is referred to as the 'coconut wireless'. Direct democracy is attributable partly to the small size of the population. Tuvalu fares favourably in governance assessments of the region, its government seen as stable in comparison to many of its neighbours (for example, see Hughes and Gosarevski 2004).

There are no organised political parties in Tuvalu. Members of Parliament represent the eight *fenua*. Elections are influenced by individual qualities, and personal and community relationships (Taafaki and Oh 1995). *Fenua* concerns are important and are a significant feature of parliamentary debates (Taafaki and Oh 1995). Draft legislation must go to each island's *falekaupule*, between first and second readings. Amendments can be proposed during that stage, but as bills are drafted in legal English community leaders often appear to have difficulty in understanding them (Taafaki and Oh 1995). However, political and church groups such as the *falekaupule* and the EKT are well-organised and can express their concerns to Government through less formal procedures. Prior to sittings, parliamentarians consult their *falekaupule* to identify issues to be raised, and report back afterwards, providing a system of

accountability. Accountability is also advanced in Tuvalu by a system of reciprocity, where an electorate expects Government contracts and civil service jobs in return for successful voting in of a Parliamentary representative. As noted in Chapter One, reciprocity stems from customary systems of obligation and is not necessarily viewed as a form of corruption (Taafaki and Oh 1995). The civil service provides policy and advice, and implements Government decisions under the Constitution. In practice, civil servants are also involved in political and policy decision-making. The number of civil servants is large in proportion to the population, however it is small in absolute numbers (Taafaki and Oh 1995).

Non-state actors play a significant role in public policy. Agencies of other national governments, such as the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), as well as regional organisations such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) affect governance in Tuvalu (Cook 1998). Others involved include pastors of the EKT, friends of political leaders, spouses of ministers who are responsible for ceremonial functions and customary gift-giving, the National Council of Women and the private sector (Taafaki and Oh 1995). The church's influence could be seen, for example, when the Tuvalu Government withdrew the lease of its international telephone routing code to telephone sex companies in New Zealand, despite the arrangement's economic success (Finin 2002).

Tuvalu was a 'fragment of Empire' for less than one hundred years and following independence, became 'a periphery of the global system' (Connell

1980a, 107). The terms of Tuvalu's independence meant that little infrastructure was inherited from the colonial period. Government reserve funds were initially low and revenue generating capacity was limited. Subsistence was the norm, making taxes and levies infeasible. Tuvalu was soon receiving aid from Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Finin 2002). Now, major aid projects are funded by the Japan and Taiwan Governments, with Australian and New Zealand aid flows also contributing to the Tuvaluan economy. Tuvalu's economy and systems of governance are strongly influenced by expectations of bilateral aid donors and regional organisations. Official aid donors exert an influence over the types of projects undertaken and how, making the Tuvalu Government's own priorities difficult to fund (Taafaki and Oh 1995). Donors expect the Tuvaluan Government to be accountable; significant resources are thus spent administering and accounting for aid funding (Taafaki and Oh 1995). Aid money from Japan may be closely linked to Tuvaluan Government's policy to support that nation's government's whaling policy, as has occurred in other small Oceania states. Similarly, aid money from the Taiwan Government⁴¹ may be linked to the independence movement there and the need for sovereign recognition. In contrast, a proposal by the Australian Government to build a detention centre for asylum-seekers on Tuvalu was refused by the Tuvaluan Government.

After independence, the Tuvalu Government sought to 'generate per capita benefits that would be inverse to its size' and looked beyond its national borders to do so (Finin 2002, 5). These ventures have included the production of postage stamps (for sale in international markets: Figure 2), rental of

⁴¹ The Taiwanese embassy is the only permanent diplomatic presence in Tuvalu.

telecommunication rights, investment in property in the United States, the establishment of the Tuvalu Trust Fund (TTF), and lease of the international domain name assigned to Tuvalu, the commercially attractive dotTV. The success of these ventures has been varied.

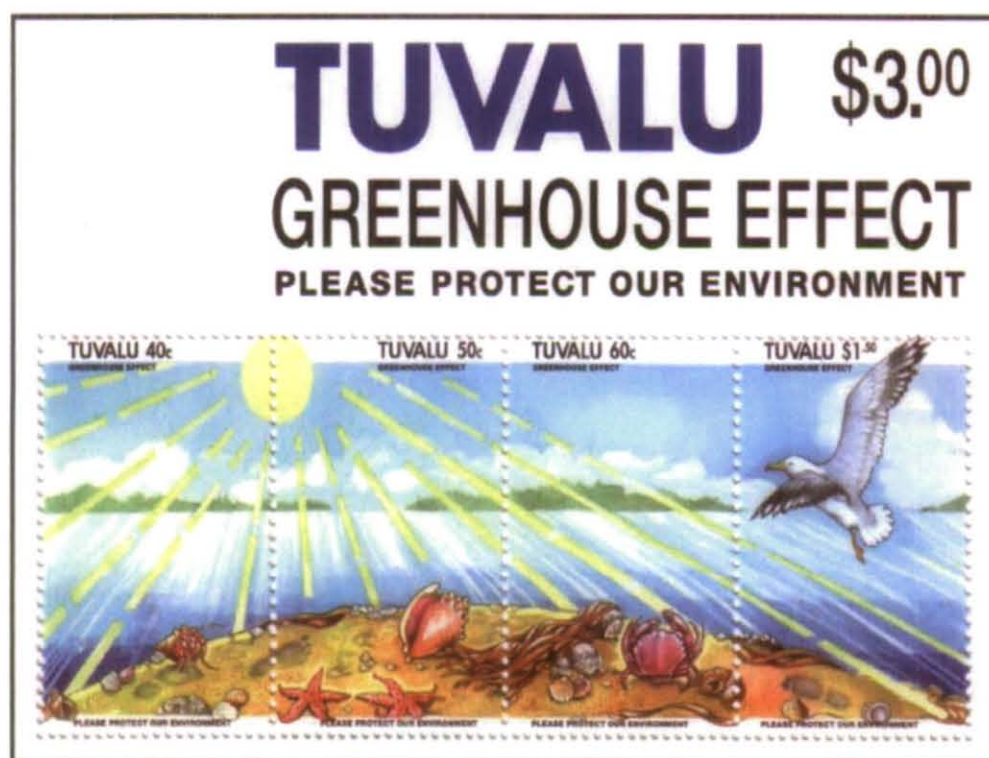


Figure 2: Tuvalu 'Greenhouse Effect' stamps, release date 2 November 1993

Arguably most successful in terms of economic policy was the TTF. Established in 1987 with contributions from Governments of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom and with smaller contributions from those of Japan, Korea and Tuvalu, its real capital value is always maintained. Yearly returns are market-driven and not always available, which led to the establishment of a second buffer fund. Costs still generally exceed revenues although Tuvalu has not fallen into a debt trap (Finin 2002). Another similar

fund has been developed, the *Falekaupule*, with assistance from the ADB.

The fund supports projects of individual island authorities.

In 1982 Exclusive Economic Zones extending 200 miles from the coast of all nations with sea boundaries were established under the international law of the sea. Tuvalu gained a large expanse of sovereign territory (900,000 square kilometres) and its fishing rights have significant commercial value (Knapman et al. 2002). Since independence, several commentators have advocated the development of commercial export of tuna from Tuvalu (Connell 1980b; 1999; Tisdell and Fairbairn 1983). However, while fishing licenses are sold to Taiwanese fishers, no successful commercial export fishing has been developed. A Government fishing venture in Funafuti, National Fishing Corporation of Tuvalu (NAFICOT) was established during the 1980s but became defunct due to high transportation costs. Fish is now only caught and sold for local consumption. Obstacles to developing a local tuna export industry, such as large-scale processing or chilled tuna transportation, include the lack of freight capacity to other countries. Economic appraisals of Tuvalu, by Mellor (2003) and Knapman et al. (2002), are pessimistic about the potential success of similar attempts in the future.

Tuvalu is characterised as a Least Developed Country and a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) in international governance and often referred to as a 'micro-state', or a Migration Remittance Administration Bureaucracy (MIRAB) state (Bertram 1999; 2004; Bertram and Watters 1985; 1986; Boland and Dollery 2006). Tuvalu's economy has been characterised as

centrally comprised by this 'particular constellation of economic forces' (Bertram 1999, 105). Tuvalu was the first Oceanic country to be researched by one of the developers of the MIRAB model, Geoff Bertram. In 1979, Tuvalu's newly independent economy⁴² possessed a 'stunning discrepancy between export production and import consumption (Bertram 1999, 110). It also displayed violations of neo-classical labour market theory. Limited external job opportunities in international shipping and the phosphate mines of Banaba and Nauru were rationed across time, by island community, and by kinship group.

Unlike citizens of some other nation states in Oceania, Tuvaluans have few options for permanent migration (Appleyard and Stahl 1995). While there are Tuvaluans in Fiji, New Zealand, and Australia, Tuvalu does not enjoy universal migration rights into New Zealand, as do citizens of Niue or Cook Islands. Interestingly, during the 1980s, populations of Tuvalu and Kiribati were singled in Australia out as likely to benefit from a special immigration quota into Australia (Howlett 1985). However, such a quota was never implemented, despite a demographic analysis conducted at the Australian National University that painted a grave picture of overcrowding in Tuvalu, particularly on Funafuti (Tsfaghiorghis 1994 cf. Rakaseta et al. 1998). Resettlement and emigration schemes for Tuvaluans into Australia were considered to give rise to

⁴² Tuvalu does not have its own currency, although it contracts the minting of some coins. Australian currency is used as legal tender. The currency situation has been analysed by Fairbairn (1994) who notes that while using currency of another country brings a degree of monetary stability, there are also disadvantages. These include the inability of the Tuvalu Government to use the exchange rate as a macroeconomic policy tool (Australian International Development Assistance Bureau 1994; Fairbairn 1994).

not inconsiderable political difficulties for Australia, by allowing privileged migration access for Tuvalu citizens, and would involve major issues of regional equity and precedent. The socio-political impacts of a large-scale migration from Tuvalu for the remaining population could be most unfortunate (Fisk and Mellor 1986, 107).

However, a report commissioned by the Australian Aid Agency noted that a policy of granting concessionary immigration rights to people from Tuvalu and Kiribati would not be any different to opportunities available to Cook Islanders, Niueans and Tokelauans who, by virtue of their New Zealand citizenship had unconstrained immigration rights into Australia (Appleyard and Stahl 1995). These limitations have implications for both population pressure and future income from remittances (Connell 1999). Nevertheless, employment on commercial cargo ships contributes substantially to national income. The Tuvalu Maritime Training Institute on Amatuku, an islet of Funafuti, is dedicated to training young Tuvaluan men to enter that international labour market.

Remittances contribute considerably to the Tuvaluan economy, and have done so since the beginning of the twentieth century (Munro 1990b). Remittances are sent to help support members of a worker's kin group, village and *fenua* (Munro 1990b). Census statistics indicate that 47 per cent of Tuvaluan households receive remittance income regularly and for 18 per cent of households remittances are the main source of income. More than half (55.6%) of all remittances are received from outside Tuvalu (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2004). Remittances from phosphate mines on Banaba stopped in the 1980s and those from Nauru in the late 1990s, with the

cessation of phosphate mining. Tuvaluans working in New Zealand were surveyed in 1998 (Simati and Gibson 2001). In that study, it was argued that long term continuation of remittances among Tuvaluans there is likely. The authors found that remittances appeared to rise for 30 years after a migrant has arrived in New Zealand, and not decay as might be expected.

Geographic isolation and limited resources are said to contribute to very limited potential for an improved Tuvaluan economy (Australian International Development Assistance Bureau 1994). However, Finin (2002) argues that Tuvalu has a more secure economic base than many of its neighbours, despite possessing fewer resources. While agriculture has limited importance in terms of exports, especially with the cessation of copra exports in 1993, outside the capital most of the population depends partially on subsistence activities, despite the poor quality of atoll soils (Connell 1999). According to census statistics, thirty eight per cent of households are engaged in subsistence agriculture and sixty six percent of households are engaged in subsistence fishing (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2004). Taafaki and Oh (1995) argue that poverty of natural endowments has led to a careful use of resources in Tuvalu. Connell (1980b) raises the concern that 'food dependency' has a detrimental effect on Tuvalu's economy, with imported food items costing twice as much as they did in their countries of origin. However, Mellor (2003) considers that the subsistence sector contributes significantly to economic resilience, reporting that in 1990, subsistence production constituted 26 per cent of Gross Domestic Product.

The shift from local to imported food is widely seen as a problematic incursion, a form of colonialism on the supermarket shelves (Connell 1980a) and a problematic loss of cultural vitality (Iese 2005). Early colonial officials in the Ellice Islands lamented imported food, clothes and other goods as sulliers of the purity and simplicity of island life:

The old and Spartan simplicity of the standard of living, which was maintained upon the almost exclusive diets of cocoanuts [sic], pandanus, and fish has vanished before the cultivated taste which demands rice, meat, sugar, and biscuits, and which is inclined to scorn the simple food of a former generation. Clothes of shocking shape and atrocious colour have almost replaced the picturesque Kilt of leaves or fine woven mat ... the rapid decline of the simple arts and crafts among the natives is very much to be regretted (Mahaffy 1909, cited in Munro 1990a, 35).

This theme continues today, with debate over merits of coconuts, fish, *pulaka* and pandanus versus rice, sugar and tinned meat among scholars. Such debates are underscored by a sense that the islanders have allowed their 'natural' diet to become 'contaminated' by imported products which are damaging to health. Such a position is somewhat incongruous when the vast majority of the world's population participates in trade in foodstuffs, and dietary health issues are prevalent in many industrialised countries. Notwithstanding the importance of dietary-related health issues or the environmental benefits of local produce, it is paternalistic for contemporary economists and scholars to describe with an attitude of lamentation how, in Tuvalu in contemporary times, cash is needed to buy items considered to be

necessities such as rice and sugar, as Besnier (1993; 1995) for instance does⁴³. Debates over local versus imported foods reflect wider concerns with tensions between individualism, modernity and capitalism versus 'culture' or 'traditional' and 'communal' ways of life. Such concerns are expressed by Tuvaluans and outsiders (Besnier 1993; Iese 2005; Paolo 1981).

The Tuvalu islands are often described in terms that emphasise smallness in terms of land area. Typically, reports on Tuvalu commence with a description of its physical settings, with emphasis firmly on landscapes: the smallness, fragmentation and low elevation of its dry surfaces. Echoes are heard in such discourses of reluctant colonisation. For instance:

Tuvalu is a small and fragmented land and one of the world's smallest and lowest island nations, with a land area of only 25.9 square kilometres and elevations of generally less than three metres (South Pacific Regional Environment Programme 1997, 5).

Tuvalu is a small and fragmented land, and one of the world's smallest self-governing nations. While it covers an ocean area of some 1.3 million square kilometres, its actual land area is only 25.9 square kilometres (Lane 1994, 1).

By almost every measure Tuvalu is close to the base line. Population? With barely 10,000 people, the Vatican City is virtually the only country with a smaller population. Visitors? Tuvalu's annual 100 to 150 genuine tourists make this one of

⁴³ For example, a paternalistic tone is evident in Besnier's (1993, 190) account of Nukulaelae's transition to a cash-based economy, using vocabulary that suggests a violent collision:

As it is hurtling headlong into a cash-based economy through increased dependency on imported food, imported house-building materials, and gas-guzzling outboard motors, Nukulaelae is fast becoming desperately cash-hungry.

the world's least visited destinations. Area? The nine islands add up to just 25.6 square kilometres (10 square miles) and only two of them - Vaitupu and Nanumea - are larger than New York's Central Park or London's Hampstead Heath. Height? You can climb a palm tree or church tower, but nowhere does the land reach more than five metres above sea level (Bennetts and Wheeler 2001, np).

That such a small group of atolls, only one of which can be seen from more than twenty kilometres away, should in 1568 be the first landfall of the great Spanish explorer, Mendaña, now seems quite extraordinary. That four hundred years of subsequent history have gone almost unnoticed in the outside world is much less surprising. The group of atolls is Tuvalu, now one of the smallest independent nations in the world ... then some nine small Polynesian atolls distant even from each other and quite remote from the larger islands of the Pacific (Connell 1980a, 103).

Academic writing on Tuvalu tends to stress smallness in terms of physical size, economy and population. Koch (1961) highlights smallness by using qualifying adjectives and adverbs in his quantification of the island's physical characteristics. He describes the surface area of the nine islands as ranging from 'a mere 0.4 square kilometres to seven square kilometres' and the elevation as 'scarcely more than two to five metres above sea level' (Koch 1961, 9). Munro (1990a, 29) starts his historical account of Tuvalu by describing it as a 'micro-state' and 'one of the world's smallest nations'. Besnier frequently sets the scene for his anthropological accounts of literacy and discourse on Nukulaelae with a description of the atoll as small and isolated (Besnier 1989; 1991; 1993; 1994a; 1994b). Niuatui (1991, ii) also reproduces the 'small, isolated and poor' perspective of Tuvalu, while Goldsmith (2002) links weakness with smallness.

These emphases on smallness are potentially quite useful for understanding processes such as transport of goods and people between islands, and economies of scale in trade, agriculture and consumption. However, smallness and fragmentation seem to define the very character of Tuvalu itself for many commentators, for whom it has become an entrenched litany. Yet it is well-established that small states, especially those comprised of islands, are often subject to such orthodox perspectives which may have little relevance to the life of their inhabitants (Baldacchino 1993; Baldacchino and Milne 2000; Hau'ofa 1993; Prasad 2003). Indeed, few inhabitants complain about the purportedly intrinsic isolation, resource poverty and remoteness of their islands. While land is profoundly important, isolation is not widely regarded to be problematic:⁴⁴

Nowadays a Tuvaluan regards his [sic] land as far more important than a Tuvaluan of last century. Although money can be substituted for land in the capitalist mode, it is difficult to convince Tuvaluans of this, especially those in the outer islands, who believe that money is for foreigners and land is for Tuvaluans (Leupena and Lutelu 1987, 165).

⁴⁴ Most land in Tuvalu is held in customary ownership. It can be used, leased, transferred and inherited only in accordance with the *Native Lands Ordinance 1957* and the *Tuvalu Lands Code 1962*. The Native Lands Ordinance is premised on the principle that land cannot be alienated by sale, gift, lease or otherwise to anyone who is not a native except in accordance with its provisions. Family land areas are acquired from ancestors or chiefs and divided. According to the *Interpretation and General Provisions Act 1988 Section 10(1)*, land means "land covered by water, any estate or interest in land, all things growing on land, and buildings and other things permanently fixed to land and any cellar, cistern, sewer, drain or culvert in or under land. If land accretes naturally from an owner's land towards the sea then the accretion belongs to the landowner. However, if accretion does not adjoin existing land it belongs to the Government (Pulea and Farrier 1994). Besnier (1994b) notes that, on Nukulaelae, land is the principal measure of economic power. Nevertheless, because it is roughly distributed evenly among kin groups, inequality maps to symbolic capital, such as an individual's oratorical skills. Leupena and Lutelu (1987, 154) state that 'a Tuvaluan values his [sic] pieces of land more than any of his other possessions'.

Transportation to the islands is considered by many visitors to be difficult. Only Funafuti and Nukufetau have entrances to lagoons or shores through surrounding reefs large enough for anything bigger than a ship's shore launch or a canoe. Access to shore from the transport vessels is thus perilous in high tide or in bad weather, as noted by Brady (1974). What I observed when I went to the three northern-most islands in 2005 - Nanumea, Nanumaga and Niutao - was that many island inhabitants take these crossings, and their occasional perilousness, firmly in their stride. The crews of the vessels are adept at handling precious passengers and cargo. Although accidents do occur and I heard anecdotal evidence of four-wheel drives and motorbikes occasionally ending up useless on the sea-bed, voyages between islands and transitions from ship to land are for the most part mundane affairs in everyday life in Tuvalu. They signify not isolation but connection to one's kin in different places.

At its most extreme, the litany of smallness culminates in a doomsday scenario, predicted by some to await much of Oceania, with individual countries facing rapid population growth, environmental damage and poor economic performance (Callick 1993). Constraints are identified in high transport, communication and administration costs, a small and dispersed domestic market, isolation from external markets and limited natural resources (Australian International Development Assistance Bureau 1994; Connell 1999; Munro 1990a). With declining aid and increasing population, there are considerable pressures placed on cash income and natural resources in Tuvalu, with associated negative consequences for the availability of jobs, education and health services (Australian International Development

Assistance Bureau 1994), with more entrenched reliance on aid. Munro (1990a, 31) is of the opinion that '[t]here is an element of sad irony that a people once so self-contained should now be dependent to such a degree'. Furthermore, it has been argued that social systems in Tuvalu in which all those in need are cared for is beginning to break down with increasing demand for cash incomes (Zuñiga 2003). Others, however, consider that socio-economic systems can respond and adjust to the challenges of high population, low economic growth and environmental degradation (Cuthbertson and Cole 1995). Some interview extracts and other accounts suggest that the idea of the poverty of natural resources of the Tuvalu islands has little meaning in Tuvalu:

P5: Most of my salary goes towards paying rent. There is not much left over for anything else and it's hard sometimes. But I know that if I go fishing on the weekends and collect breadfruit then we will always have enough to eat.

P1: Life is not that hard - it's easy. Whether you have a job or no job, you still have something to eat.

P6: In Tuvalu if you don't have money, just get a fishing rod, go down to the beach and fish ... And if they eat fish every day nobody complains ... And anything that is found on the beach, especially the reefs, the sea-shells, shellfish, everything is eaten ... I mean who would want to go to another place, when you have everything here?

Despite the economic problems of the world Tuvaluans believe that they are secure in their land and the sea that surrounds them. They strongly believe that God the Creator will provide them with all the necessities of life (Samuelu 1983, 39).

The *pulaka* pit is very different from the richly productive *taro* garden of Tonga and Samoa. But it ensures sufficiency (Sopoaga 1983, 181).

For development to be sustainable for Tuvalu it needs to be development which specifically sustains the needs of Tuvaluans economically, politically, ecologically and culturally without jeopardising and destroying the resources for future generations. Development needs to be of the kind which empowers Tuvaluans, gives security, self-reliance, self-esteem and respect. This is different from western perspectives which concentrate and involve a western style economy and money system in which money is the centre of everything (Niuatui 1991, ii).

In [Australia] if you don't have money you live on the street. If you can't pay the rent the landlord will kick you out. In [Tuvalu] you don't worry about money if you want to live like a Tuvaluan. Yes, you may be poor, [with] no money. But what you eat is fresh from the garden and you live a healthy life (Ioane 2004, np).

Tuvalu and climate change

Representations of Tuvalu in popular Western discourses are unlike those of many other Oceania islands; Tuvalu was effectively absent from popular Western discourses until its entrance onto the world stage in climate change debate. Unlike Fiji, Samoa, Tahiti, Hawaii and Rapa Nui which are all islands or archipelagos with a strong presence in Western discourses of island exoticism, Tuvalu's image has been almost untouched by the tourism industry. Its islands have had no Margaret Mead or Gaughinesque Westerner to produce significant representations of it in cultural and academic arenas as Samoa and Tahiti did. Neither does Tuvalu have something like a mysterious landscape populated by stone Moai as on Rapa Nui. Furthermore, Tuvalu's

lack of easily exploitable natural resources destined for external markets attracts little in the way of foreign investment. It does not regularly attract media attention (climate change aside), largely a function of its internal political and social stability. Moreover, although internationally mobile, the small absolute number of Tuvaluan people travelling around the world is insufficient for them to make a significant impression on host communities. There are no visibly large migrant communities of Tuvaluans anywhere, except in New Zealand, where their numbers are officially around 2,600 (Statistics New Zealand 2007). When I am asked the topic of my study by acquaintances in Australia, the most common response is ‘where is Tuvalu?’ Indeed, before I came interested in sea level rise associated with climate change, I had never heard of Tuvalu either. A former People’s Lawyer of Tuvalu, a position usually filled by a foreign volunteer, wrote a memoir originally published in 2000 under the title ‘The People’s Lawyer’ but republished in 2004 with a new, telling title ‘Where the hell is Tuvalu?’ (Ells 2004). Contrastingly, I have never met a Tuvaluan who has not heard of Australia.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ O’Connor (2006) wrote a novel called *Tuvalu*, in which a character named Tilly is dying and dreams of Tuvalu. The novel is set in Japan, and focuses on a number of Westerners (including Tilly) and a Japanese heiress variously constructing isolated, island-like worlds using surliness, secrecy, cultural disorientation, nihilism and aimless promiscuity. O’Connor uses Tuvalu as a metaphor: to embody the allure and fear of islandness and capture the isolation experiences of these characters. In an unwelcoming Tokyo, Tilly dreams of Tuvalu but for her it exists only as an idea, a symbol of idealised happiness. Tilly, along with her ex-boyfriend and his new love interest, harness the dream. They know that Tuvalu *exists*, but they do not know much more about the place. They fill in its image in their imaginations. For Tilly, it is crucial to her emotional survival that she never actually visits Tuvalu. She feels, paradoxically, that ‘in order to keep Tuvalu I have to keep away from it’ (O’Connor 2006, 247). Tilly says ‘I’ve never been anywhere near it. I’ve never even studied it. For all I know it might well have sunk. But that one word’s taken on a meaning all of its own’ (O’Connor 2006, 245). O’Connor’s novel ends in a hotel room where Tilly’s ex-boyfriend and his new love, Mami, are spending the night before they travel to Tuvalu. Mami uses clichéd island imagery to fill in her idea of what Tuvalu is like:

I bet it has bright green tropical trees, big monkeys, natives and cerulean blue

The obscurity of Tuvalu in popular Western discourses is, however, changing as debate over Tuvalu's climate change impacts becomes more and more widely circulated. There has been a marked interest shown in Tuvalu by Westerners from the time when climate change became an international political issue in the 1980s, and low lying atolls and reef islands were identified by the IPCC as being particularly vulnerable to climate change related sea level rise. Attention paid to Tuvalu in other contexts, for example, the dotTV Internet domain or the proving of Darwin's theory of atoll formation, pales in comparison.

Assessment reports published by the IPCC aim to provide in-depth examination of academic and technical literature on the occurrence of climate change, its impacts, and options for reducing carbon dioxide emissions and adapting to climate change impacts. Published at intervals of several years, the most recent is contained in the Fourth Assessment Report from 2007. The aim of the assessment reports are to define what is known about the sensitivity of systems to climate change, their adaptive capacity, and their vulnerability.

While the IPCC reviews and synthesises current knowledge, it does not possess a mandate to conduct research. It seeks to be 'policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive' (Pittock 2002, 393). Thus it attempts to refrain from passing judgement on whether climate change effects are tolerable or

oceans. I bet it has ocean whichever way you look. I bet I won't even need to wear a watch (O'Connor 2006, 346-347).

In hoping for spatial and temporal isolation, tropical landscapes and faceless, native others, Mami is yearning for a mythical island. She wants Tuvalu to be her world, her complete escape from the emotional isolation she experiences in Tokyo. Mami leaves the hotel room in the middle of the night, and the reader is left unsure whether or not she comes back, whether or not the pair make it to Tuvalu.

dangerous. This determination is explicitly deferred to readers of IPCC reports.

According to the IPCC, changes in climate are influenced by internal variability and external factors. External factors contribute to radiative forcing, a phenomenon associated with changing temperatures on the earth's surface. Natural external factors include increased solar radiation and volcanic activity, although these have contributed marginally to radiative forcing over the last century. Anthropogenic external factors include atmospheric emissions of the collection of gases known as greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and halocarbons. These gases contribute to positive radiative forcing as they build up in the atmosphere. The atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide, for example, has increased thirty one per cent since 1750. When positive, radiative forcing tends to warm surface temperatures (Forster et al. 2007; Houghton et al. 2001).

Taking into account both current knowledge and existing uncertainties, it is likely that most climate warming observed over the past few decades is attributable to human activities. Global average surface temperature has increased, and temperatures have risen in the lowest eight kilometres of the atmosphere during the last forty years. There is strong evidence that global sea level has risen in the twentieth century at a rate of about 1.7 mm per year; that sea level is currently rising at an increased rate at around 3mm per year, and that it is projected to rise at an even greater rate in the twenty first century (Solomon et al. 2007). Furthermore, climate models incorporating past and

future emissions of greenhouse gases have projected globally averaged surface temperatures to increase. Global average water vapour concentration and precipitation are also projected to increase. Snow and ice coverage is projected to continue retreating. Sea level rise from thermal expansion and loss of mass from glaciers and ice caps is projected to increase. Extreme weather events are likely to occur, such as higher maximum and minimum temperatures and more hot days. Other changes, including more intense precipitation events, increased risk of drought, and increased tropical cyclone intensities, are likely but only in certain areas. Climate change impacts are likely to differ by location, but include melting polar ice caps and glaciers, increasing frequency of cyclones and storm surges, increasing temperatures, rising sea levels, changing rainfall patterns and changing distributions of disease carriers such as mosquitoes (Solomon et al. 2007).

The IPCC has considered specifically the impacts of climate change on small island states (Mimura et al. 2007; Nurse et al. 2001). Noting considerable heterogeneity among small islands, the IPCC characterised these states as nevertheless sharing common features that render them particularly vulnerable to climate change (Nurse et al. 2001). Vulnerability to climate change arises from a combination of particular island characteristics that include small physical size, limited natural resources, proneness to natural disasters, relative isolation and poorly developed infrastructure (Nurse et al. 2001). The most significant and immediate impacts are likely to be related to changes in rainfall, soil moisture, wind speed and direction, sea level and short-term variation in wave action (Mimura et al. 2007). Some of the world's smallest

island nation states in land area particularly, but also in population and economy, are composed entirely of atolls and reef islands. These are Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Kiribati and the Maldives. Serious climate change impacts on socio-ecological systems are considered likely on these islands, where vulnerability arises from high population densities, susceptibility of subterranean freshwater lenses to contamination, coastal erosion, waste dumping on reefs and mangroves, low levels of income and high food insecurity (Barnett and Adger 2003; Burns 2000a; 2000b).

Sea level rise plus increased incidence of drought, cyclones and storm surges have been identified as significant futures risk for Tuvalu (Lewis 1989; Pita et al. 1999; Roy and Connell 1991; Sem et al. 1996). Attempts to measure changes in sea level as an impact of climate change from short-term data from tide gauges have not been conclusive (Church et al. 2004; Hunter 2002). Church et al. (2006), however, use satellite data to estimate sea level rise of 2.0 +/- 1.7 mm per year at Tuvalu.

Ecological and social ramifications of climate change are interdependent on existing conditions. Any effects of climate change in Tuvalu occur in biophysical systems already under pressure from anthropogenic activity including habitat destruction, over-use of natural resources, and pollution related to population growth (Zurick 1995). Such pressures are particularly strong on Funafuti. The outer islands have different vulnerabilities - transport and communication services there tend to be infrequent and at times unreliable. Furthermore, outer island residents are more dependant than inhabitants of Funafuti on subsistence crops such as *pulaka*, which are

vulnerable to salt-water infiltration and drought associated with climate change. Although subsistence livelihoods may be resilient against weather extremes and climate variability in Tuvalu, the question of large-scale adaptation to climate change is a pressing concern (Barnett and Adger 2003; Koshy and Philip 2002). Adaptation to climate change may be understood as the adjustment of a system to moderate the impacts of climate change, to take advantage of new opportunities or to cope with the consequences (Adger et al. 2003). In the long term, human habitation of atolls is at risk from sea level rise and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. The risk of forced abandonment of atolls raises questions about extinguishment of sovereignty and violation of the human right to nationality (Barnett and Adger 2003; Farbotko 2005b; The New Economics Foundation 2004). It has been widely observed that the social and ecological impacts of climate change are inequitably distributed in type and severity across the globe, with island and atoll states being 'victims' who contribute little to the problem, and that these inequities need to be incorporated into climate change decision-making and planning (Adger 2001; Brown 2003; Hey 2001; Huq et al. 2003; Metz et al. 2002; Williams 1994).

In response to climate change perceived as a global issue, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol and various agreements by the Conference of Parties have been negotiated by the international political community. The main purpose of the legal instruments on climate change is to help curb global emissions of gases that contribute to climate change. It is these instruments which operationalised the

perceived need for global action in reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Adger 2001). The same political process also resulted in the establishment of the IPCC.

The UNFCCC was the first instrument under international law used to confront climate change ramifications; Tuvalu is a party to the convention. Its preamble states: 'low lying and other small island states' are 'particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.' The main objective of the convention is to achieve 'stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system' (Article 2). All parties are obliged, among other things, to make available inventories of greenhouse gas emissions, adopt national programs and strategies for mitigation, promote and participate in technology transfer to assist mitigation, and promote sustainable management of greenhouse gas sinks (Article 4(1)(a)-(d)).

Parties to the Convention with industrialised economies or economies in transition to industrialisation (listed in Annex 1 to the UNFCCC) are required to aim for a reduction in greenhouse gas emission measures with the objective of stabilizing emissions at a 1990 level by 2000 (Articles 4(2)(a) and (b)). This provision falls just short of being a legal obligation, and does not apply to Tuvalu or other developing country parties. For those parties with industrialised economies only (listed in Annex II to the UNFCCC) there is an obligation to provide financial resources to developing country parties to assist them in various ways to meet their obligations under the convention (Article 4(3)). The small island states are listed as among the particularly

vulnerable locations in Article 4(8)(a)-(i). Annex II parties must also assist developing country parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in meeting the costs of adaptation (Article 4(4)).

The UNFCCC introduced the legal principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (Article 3(1)). This principle recognises the common responsibility of all states to advance environmental protection, while simultaneously imposing greater obligations on developed states that have more capacity to do so. It is closely related to the principle of intra-generational equity, which is another basic tenet of the UNFCCC (Articles 3(1) and 3(2)).

In the early 1990s when the UNFCCC was being negotiated, the scientific uncertainty associated with climate change was considerable. It was not until 1995 that the IPCC concluded that the balance of evidence pointed to discernible anthropogenic interference with climatic systems (Anonymous 1995). Although uncertainty remained (Adger et al. 2003), this conclusion provided the scientific stimulus for the second legal instrument of the climate change regime, the Kyoto Protocol, which was adopted in December 1997. The Kyoto Protocol required ratification by Annex I parties producing at least fifty five per cent of emissions before it could enter into force (Article 25).

The Kyoto Protocol gives the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities further weight than the UNFCCC by specifying legally binding emission limitation and reduction targets for Annex I parties (Hey 2001). Its aim is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by five per cent below

1990 levels (Article 3(1)). Each Annex I party has individual targets (contained in Annex B of the Kyoto Protocol) for reducing emissions of six greenhouse gases during the first commitment period, which runs from 2008 to 2012. Tuvalu is a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol, which contains no new obligations for it or other developing country parties. Article 10, however, reaffirms developing country commitments that were established by the UNFCCC.

The UNFCCC, while ratified almost universally, creates only non-binding obligations on parties. The Kyoto Protocol, which was adopted in 1997 following UNFCCC negotiations that focused on detailed obligations for developed countries, has been ratified. In late October 2004, the State Duma of the Russian Federation endorsed ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, bringing it into effect. But the Kyoto Protocol remains something of a toothless tiger, since the United States Government, (and until late 2007, the Australian Government) has refused to sign it. Furthermore, although the Conference of Parties under the UNFCCC meets annually to monitor its implementation and continue talks on tackling climate change, commitment to mitigating climate change impacts on a global level through reduced emissions of greenhouse gases is far from universal. Notwithstanding the Kyoto Protocol entering into force, one of the most critical issues for Tuvalu in terms of mitigation is the most appropriate level of emissions for the negotiators to set as a collective target. Full implementation of the Kyoto Protocol will reduce global emissions by five per cent. This target is significantly lower than the 60 per cent emission reductions that can be

approximated from the IPCC recommendation of 50 to 70 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide necessary to achieve stabilisation at 1990 levels. While the five percent target is the first in what was intended to be a negotiated series of increasingly strict targets, the slow rate of progress to date means that the Kyoto Protocol is a weak instrument for addressing climate change concerns in Tuvalu, particularly with regard to mitigation.

Populations of small island nation states, meanwhile, contribute small amounts to global greenhouse emissions. Per person, Oceania residents contribute an estimated one quarter of carbon dioxide emissions attributable to the average person worldwide (Hay 2003). Furthermore, members of small island nation states have a small voice in the international arena where these emissions negotiations occur (Ashe 1999; Ashe et al. 1999; Burns 2000a; Shibuya 1997). Nevertheless, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), a negotiation and lobby group comprising forty three small island states and observers, was formed in response to shared concerns about climate change impacts on small islands and to promote sustainable development on them (Alliance of Small Island States 2007). It was successful in having the interests of small island states recognised and to some extent advanced in the international legal instruments (Ashe et al. 1999; Sopoaga 2006).

The Kyoto Protocol is sometimes criticised for excluding developing country parties from obligations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Larger developing country parties such as China and India are responsible for the emission of significant amounts of greenhouse gases, as are those of oil-producing states. The crux of the larger developing state parties' collective

argument is that, given historic and current emission levels by industrialised state parties, the cost of emission reductions should be mainly borne by those industrialised state parties, along with the cost of abatement emissions in the developing states (Hey 2001). Baumert et al. (2003) and Gillespie (2003) argue that an emissions trading system incorporating parties representing the industrialised and transition states with major greenhouse gas emitting industries, as well as some developing state parties, would considerably advance climate protection. How inequitable hampering of development in these states is to be addressed under such a scenario remains unclear. Article 4(8) of the UNFCCC and Article 3(14) of the Kyoto Protocol also pose a dilemma by requiring the specific development needs of many different types of states to be addressed. According to these provisions, it is necessary to avoid both the adverse effects of climate change in small island and other vulnerable states, and to minimise impacts on energy exporting states such as those that produce oil (Barnett and Dessai 2002).

Alternative legal solutions for small island states have been raised in response to this stalemate (Farbotko 2005b)⁴⁶. At the 2002 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, then Prime Minister Koloa Talake indicated that Tuvalu had engaged an American firm of attorneys to investigate the possibility of bringing legal action against sovereign states and corporations that are responsible for high levels of greenhouse gas emissions. Given the global nature of the climate change problem, and the international negotiation framework that has been established under the UNFCCC, the International

⁴⁶ The material on legal redress in this chapter has been substantially drawn from an unpublished, peer-reviewed conference paper of my own (Farbotko 2005b).

Court of Justice (ICJ) is, *prima facie*, a potential forum for adjudicating climate change issues between Tuvalu and other states. Customary international law on transboundary environmental harm prevents nation states from engaging in activities that harm other nation states. This rule has been reiterated in Principle 2 of the 1992 Rio Declaration, which declares: 'States have ... the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.' The no-harm principle forms the basis of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. Moreover, state parties that violate international law are obliged to compensate states that are directly or indirectly damaged, a rule that forms the basis of the law of state responsibility (Tol and Verheyen 2004). Establishing a case against a nation that causes damage to Tuvalu (on the basis of greenhouse gas emissions activities that occur within that state's borders) requires identification of damaging activity attributable to that state and the establishment of a causal link between the activities and damage in Tuvalu. A claim for negligent harm might be established on the basis that emitting high levels of greenhouse gases is an avoidable state activity (Farbotko 2005b).

Bringing such a case before the ICJ would be legally advantageous for Tuvalu because the ICJ is a decision-making arena that is both politically visible and legally authoritative (Strauss 2003). However, jurisdiction of the ICJ over a particular state can only be established with that state's consent. The United

States Government, which refuses to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and reduce its greenhouse emissions, does not submit to the jurisdiction of the ICJ.

Similarly, while disputing nation states can agree to other, more *ad hoc* dispute resolution mechanisms such as mediation as an alternative to the ICJ, the larger industrialised state parties are unlikely to submit to such mechanisms initiated by the Tuvaluan Government in the context of climate change (Farbotko 2005b).

A slightly more promising international legal forum is the specialised dispute resolution system under the UNFCCC, a treaty that has been ratified by the US. There is a non-binding provision under Article 14(2), for state parties to agree to binding dispute resolution under the ICJ. Again, the United States has not agreed to this process. However, Articles 14(5) and 14(6) provide for non-optional recourse to a conciliation commission for disputing parties. The Conference of Parties has not, to date, adopted procedures for the conciliation commission in accordance with Article 14(7). However, if these procedures were in place, the conciliation commission could help to establish that certain countries are not complying with their UNFCCC obligations (Strauss 2003).

Tort law in the United States may also provide legal redress. Not only are US tort law actions enforceable, in contrast with international law, plaintiffs from outside the US can access the legal system. Tuvaluan citizens or the state of Tuvalu are able to access US courts via the Alien Torts Claims Act (ATCA). This option involves bringing a tort action for a violation of international law. The benefit of the ATCA is that it is jurisdictionally appropriate for bringing

an action against US defendants, which could be either private corporations (possibly identified with reference to market share) or government agencies. Specifically, a claim under the ATCA needs to show that an international law has been violated. According to Reed (2002), a claim in this arena is most likely to succeed if framed in terms of human rights. While international human rights law is well-developed, there is currently no particular statement of a human right to which Tuvaluans could appeal in the context of climate change. At some point in the future, if Tuvalu starts to become uninhabitable from the effects of climate change, Tuvaluans could invoke the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 15 that stipulates no person shall be denied their nationality. At present, if damage to subsistence livelihoods in Tuvalu could be established, the most promising option would be to invoke the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Article 1 under which no person can be deprived of their means of subsistence. Another option is to argue for the existence of environmental human rights under international law, which would constitute a ground-breaking case as the existence of such a right is a legally disputed matter (Reed 2002). However, there are still several obstacles to successful litigation on Tuvalu's part, which are linked to the complexity of the climate change problem and the global span of its causes and impacts (Farbotko 2005b).

Establishing legal causation is likely to be particularly problematic. While general causation for climate change damage could probably be established, it is more difficult to prove specific causation (Tol and Verheyen 2004). General causation could be established by appealing to the scientific consensus that

anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases contribute to radiative forcing in the atmosphere and that this change will impact on human and natural systems. Moreover, some damage will occur regardless of any ongoing reduction efforts under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol and future instruments that are likely to be negotiated. Linking anthropogenic climate change to specific damage in Tuvalu (such as saltwater incursion into soil) however, is beyond the scope of current scientific knowledge. As a result, there is an evidentiary barrier to climate change litigation, although whether this will always be the case is a matter of scientific debate (Allen 2003).

Any climate change litigation that the Tuvaluan Government undertakes is likely to be slow, complex and expensive. These factors could be the prohibitive barriers to climate change redress, with Tuvalu's limited resources to fund specialised legal representation. Large corporations and wealthy governments would have a capacity greater than that enjoyed by the Tuvaluan Government to hire legal and scientific experts, resources which once engaged could further complicate and draw out a case. On the other hand, the Tuvaluan Government could reduce its costs (but also its share of any damages awarded) by being included among the potential plaintiffs in a large class action brought by communities of people from threatened countries and by frail/elderly people who face climate change-related health risks. In a joint case or acting alone, the Tuvaluan Government may be able to access the resources of environmental and social non-government organisations, particularly if a strong case can be established. The Tuvaluan Government has not succeeded in winning a legal case, or even in bringing an action against a

party that has contributed to its climate change challenges. Indeed, changes in leadership since Koloa Talake's government, in power from 2001-2, have witnessed a change in policy, the intention to mount a legal challenge dropped. Nevertheless, the prospect of a law-suit against the United States by Tuvaluan leaders has received considerable attention in the media (Anonymous nd; Zuckerman 2003) and in campaigns addressing climate change (Hamilton nd) advancing the 'rights' of environmental refugees (The New Economics Foundation 2004).

Given the foregoing, there is thus currently little being achieved in legal and political arenas to prevent harm from climate change impacts, and Tuvalu's long term habitability remains significantly at risk. However, Tuvalu's leaders have attracted attention abroad to climate change impacts on its islands. The strategy adopted by Tuvaluan leaders has been to raise awareness of climate change issues in international political fora:

The principal aim with regard to the environment is to keep the issue of global warming on the international agenda. This will be achieved by using international forums to promote the Government's views on the impacts of environmental degradation, especially in the Pacific region (Government of Tuvalu 1992, 2).

Various platforms are used by Tuvaluan citizens, often those in a position of national or community leadership, to voice their concerns around the world. Tuvaluan Government representatives are vocal advocates of global mitigation of climate change through reduced emissions of greenhouse gases in forums such as the United Nations, the UNFCCC Conference of Parties,

and the Pacific Forum, articulating strong support for the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, and expressing disappointment in the governments of those countries that do not show similar support (Sopoaga 2005; Sopoanga 2003; Toafa 2004). For example:

We live in constant fear of the adverse impacts of climate change. For a coral atoll nation, sea level rise and more severe weather events loom as a growing threat to our entire population. The threat is real and serious, and is of no difference to a slow and insidious form of terrorism against us (Sopoanga 2003, np).

To us in small island low-lying coastal States who contributed nothing to the cause, and with the least capacity to cope, the threat of climate change to our lives, our existence and our very survival is very serious. It is no longer a question of certainty. The threat is real and is very serious (Sopoaga 2005, np).

Environmental conferences are featuring presentations on climate change by members of non-government organisations (NGO) in Tuvalu. For example, an environmental conference in Sydney was organised by the international environmental NGO Friends of the Earth. Siuila Toloa, director of NGO Island Care, was an invited speaker, and stated:

In this extreme case scenario strategies of climate change refugees [sic]. This is the last resort adaptation of Tuvaluan people. Tuvaluans become climate change refugees when the land of Tuvalu becomes uninhabitable. With this last resort adaptation to climate change we Tuvaluans lose our sovereignty, our traditional customs. I think you all know how important these are to us as native landholders. It is not our hope that this will happen, and it will not happen if you and I work

together. Doing this will save us both, but particularly my small country of Tuvalu (Toloa 2004, np).

In Tuvalu, meanwhile, local knowledge, observations and media accounts of changing tides, sea levels and flooding events enmesh with the 'distant science' of climate change impacts (Connell 2003b, 98). Koshy and Philip (2002) have highlighted the need for local knowledge systems to be better incorporated into climate change decision-making, emphasising particularly that in many instances local knowledge is not treated as credible or reliable. A National Summit on Sustainable Development (NSSD) in Tuvalu was held in June and July 2004, the outcomes of which provided a basis for a national development strategy. Within this forum, the Tuvaluan Government, island council presidents, island chiefs, and private and community sector representatives articulated a need to introduce national climate change adaptation and emission reduction strategies. In particular, emphasis has been placed on a need to 'promote awareness on adaptation strategies at all levels' and to 'increase awareness on the issue of sea level rise and climate change' (National Summit on Sustainable Development 2004, 11). A National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) has also been undertaken in Tuvalu (Noa et al. nd). This UNFCCC process identifies priority activities, particularly at the community level, for responding to urgent measures for adaptation to climate change.

Connell (2003b) observes that a prominent outlet for the perception that sea levels are rising is the international media where Tuvalu is regularly portrayed as imminently threatened by, or indeed as already witnessing, sea level rise

(Dyer 1998; Field 2004; Korn 1999; Laupepa 2002; Skehan and Clennell 2001). Another media discourse is observable, one refuting accounts of sea level rise associated with climate change in Tuvalu (Baliunas and Soon 2002; Field 2001; Johnson 2002). The issue of climate change impacts on Tuvalu has been taken up by various others in different arenas who have their own stake in a disappearing or unthreatened Tuvalu. Members of environmental organisations such as Greenpeace and Germanwatch have singled out Tuvalu in the context of climate change campaigns (Greenpeace nd-b; Ralston et al. 2004). For others Tuvalu represents the diminished credibility of environmental organisations, who 'cry wolf' over climate change impacts (Eschenbach 2004b). Tuvalu is also becoming a subject of interest to artists (Carlin 2006) and documentary-makers (Horner and Le Gallic 2004; Pollock 2005; Tourell 2001). Tuvaluans are also participating in climate change debate, via blogs, chat rooms, academic studies and letters to the editor in magazines, sometimes in English and sometimes in Tuvaluan. Importantly, much focus ostensibly on Tuvalu is limited to Funafuti. Camera crews, journalists and environmentalists rarely spend time on the other eight islands, where environmental and social conditions differ significantly from those on the capital. Funafuti is the most heavily populated island and the chief site of government employment, commerce, health services and local waste and water management problems, while subsistence agriculture is central to outer island life.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have described significant events in Tuvalu's past and present. From the late nineteenth century until independence in 1978, the Ellice Islands were a peripheral and insignificant portion of Britain's empire. Following independence, and the renaming of the islands, a transformation occurred in discourses of Tuvalu in the West. As a result of the ascension of climate change as an international environmental issue, Tuvalu began to be represented in terms of climate change. Its habitability at risk from rising sea levels, the possible disappearance of a string of islands - a whole nation state - generated a great deal of international scholarly, policy and popular interest.

In the next three chapters, I return to the concept of islographs, and analyse islographs that have been generated in some of these discursive arenas of climate change.

Chapter 4: Environmentalist islographs

Introduction

The fifth objective of this work is to describe islographs of Tuvalu in climate change discourses. In Chapter One I introduced the concept of the islograph: shared, non-static imaginations of islands, mediated through words, images and symbols; useful, but not unproblematic, attempts to translate physical, social and cultural worlds of islands and coherently stabilise islandness in terms of a particular set of ideas and values. In Chapter Two, I mobilised the islograph framework in a review of island studies literature that identified two characteristics of Western islographs. Objective five is pursued in this and the following two chapters, in which I examine representations of Tuvalu.

In what follows, I specifically analyse a selection of representations of Tuvalu produced by a range of individuals and groups who claim an environmentalist stake in Tuvalu in climate change discourses. I define ‘environmentalists’ broadly as individuals and groups centrally concerned with protecting and conserving the world or portions of it. Just like any other representations of islands, environmentalist engagements with islands are islographic, and they reflect the power and interests of the individuals or groups associated with their production. Climate change campaigns that focus on Tuvalu’s ‘disappearing islands’ make useful foci for examining such roles.

My analysis of environmentalist representations of Tuvalu suggests that a large number of them (although certainly not all) originate in Western and/or post-industrial societies such as France, United Kingdom, Japan and Australia. Thus I assess whether the paradoxical space of islands and the idea of islands as imaginative geographies are observable in environmentalist islographs.

First, I contextualise Tuvalu's environmentalist islographs. Second, I analyse two islographs of Tuvalu in detail: Mark Lynas' popular science and environmentalist narrative *High Tide* (Lynas 2004b), which aims to redefine Tuvalu as a frontier of global climate change; and various activities of environmentalist non-government organisation Alofa Tuvalu which try to reposition Tuvalu as a rightful contained space where global lessons for sustainable living are to be learned.

Islographs in environmentalist campaigns

The ascension of climate change as an issue on the international political agenda has occurred at a time when new ways of imagining the world are becoming prominent. Concepts such as 'borderless world', 'global village', and 'shrinking planet' that emphasise one interconnected global system are promoting the idea of a single global environment and a planetary ethic of environmental stewardship. Environmental issues such as deforestation, desertification, biodiversity loss and climate change have become globalised, at times in tension with their legibility at smaller scales (Adger et al. 2001).

Climate change in particular is constructed as a global environmental issue, affected by and affecting all nation states, albeit to different degrees and in different ways (Hey 2001). Indeed, during the 1980s and 1990s, climate change and the separate issue of ozone depletion became the first issues to be widely understood within this new global environmental discourse. This discourse helped to foster recognition that existing international political and legal mechanisms for environmental management were inadequate, based as they were on assumptions that environmental damage could invariably be mapped in cause and effect to a nation state's territory and could be sufficiently addressed by technological innovations. Negotiations among representatives of nation states that resulted in the ratification of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol attempted, without reaching any sort of unanimous consensus, to balance the protection of the global environment with national interests in fossil fuel industries. There has resulted an on-going tension between global and national space in climate change discourse:

The global connotations of climate change are frequently alluded to in both popular and scientific discourses. The globality is usually established with reference to both the origin and the consequences of the climate issue ... greenhouse gas emissions emitted anywhere on the globe will have consequences anywhere on the globe. Climate change emerges as an issue 'beyond borders' in need of global accords ... [Yet in spite of] deterritorial representations of the climate problem, international climate policy has resulted in a territorialisation of the carbon cycle ... [rearticulating] global flows of carbon as 'national sinks' (Lovbrand and Stripple 2006, 217-218).

The canary in the coalmine

Tuvalu is being represented as a site of imminent climate change disaster in environmentalist campaigns. For instance, a publication produced by Equity Watch states⁴⁷:

Tuvalu, an island nation in the Pacific, is the perfect example of adverse impacts of climate change. Rising sea levels, resulting in floods, have changed life for the 10,000 citizens of this island [sic]. In the 1990s, Tuvalu also suffered seven cyclones. In 2001, the island [sic] was flooded for five consecutive months (2002b, 3).

In this context, Tuvalu is being represented as the 'canary in the coalmine' of the global climate system. Caged canaries were once released into coalmines in order to determine the presence of noxious gases. If the canary was retrieved alive, it was safe for miners to enter. Tuvalu, operating as a metaphorical canary, is simultaneously a contained space for environmentalists, such as members of Greenpeace⁴⁸, to locate evidence of

⁴⁷ Equity Watch is a publication produced by the Centre for Science and Environment, India. According to its website:

Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) is an independent, public interest organisation which aims to increase public awareness on science, technology, environment and development. The Centre was started in 1980. For more than two decades, CSE has been creating awareness about the environmental challenges facing our nation. Searching for solutions that people and communities can implement themselves. Challenging India to confront its problems. Inspiring it to take action. Pushing the government to create frameworks for people and communities to act on their own (Centre for Science and Environment nd).

⁴⁸ Greenpeace is an international environmentalist organisation. Its mission is stated on its Australia Pacific website as follows:

Greenpeace is an independent campaigning organisation that uses non-violent direct action to expose global environmental problems and to force solutions which are essential to a green and peaceful future. Greenpeace's goal is to ensure the ability of the earth to nurture life in all its diversity (Greenpeace nd-a, np).

climate change damage, and a litmus test for the planet as a whole. For example:

“When you talk about climate change in the Pacific, people often talk about natural disasters, like cyclones and droughts, but for countries like Tuvalu the reality is sea level rise,” explains Angenette Heffernan with Greenpeace Pacific. “The countries of the Pacific are the canaries in the coal mine,” and in Tuvalu at least, the canaries are drowning (Price 2002, np).

By such reasoning, Tuvalu is a space where the impacts of climate change seem tangible and can be represented as such to attempt to raise awareness of climate change impacts. One participant noted, however, that Tuvalu’s obscurity in Western discourses means that outside audiences may need to be educated on its island’s vulnerability to climate change impacts before its impacts can be fully understood:

P3: I think it’s hard for people to get a perception of what Tuvalu is like. I usually take photographs [of it] whenever I go to meetings [abroad]. In fact I’ve sent some photos of Tuvalu to somebody ... just last week, just to give people a sense of what it’s like. And people are pretty shocked ... I guess people have some perception of what tropical islands look like, nice round things, but when you show this long thin strip of land, with water on either side, people are very shocked by the sort of vulnerability I guess.

It is such vulnerability that renders Tuvalu ‘ideal’ in signifying climate change’s frontline:

Most news on global warming is datelined from places like Washington DC, London, and Tokyo, but if you want to see the frontlines in the battle against climate change, head 400 miles north from Fiji and land on the eroding beaches of Tuvalu (Price 2002, np).

When I asked ‘how would you like people to see Tuvalu?’ one interview participant, P2⁴⁹, answered: ‘[As] a symbol of what will happen to all of us. Disappearing, so that they will act accordingly [and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions]. Using ‘canary in the coalmine’ and ‘frontline’ imagery, Tuvalu is represented as disappearing islands in which the salvation of the planet as a whole is embodied. The anticipated submersion of Tuvalu becomes a space where the fate of the planet is reduced on island to a seemingly manageable scale. In environmentalist discourses, Tuvalu as ‘disappearing island’ is recruited to prompt *non-islanders* to act on climate change issues.

An environmentalist article, ‘Postcards from the Edge: Photos of Tuvalu show global warming in action,’⁵⁰ states that representations of Tuvalu are useful for visualising complex and often intangible phenomena:

Since 1999, photographer Gary Braasch has worked to document global warming around the world. His images bring home a concept that’s often hard to visualize. Today, as the Kyoto Protocol goes into effect, Braasch sends a dispatch and photos from Tuvalu, a Pacific Island nation whose fate already hangs in the balance (Anonymous 2005a, np).

⁴⁹ P2 is not Tuvaluan, and describes herself as an environmentalist.

⁵⁰ Published in ‘Grist’, an online, non-profit ‘environmental news and commentary’ organization (Grist 2008, np).

Some of the captions for Braasch's photographs use dramatic vocabulary to emphasise Tuvalu's environmental vulnerability:

- Wind and waves *batter* the foundation of a church in the capital, Funafuti.
- Local children playing in tidal waters *washing over* Funafuti's main road.
- Tuvalu's shoreline is *rapidly eroding* under extreme high tides.
- Seawater *bubbles up* on the edge of a runway at the Tuvalu airport.
- Kids in Funafuti watch as *water inundates* their neighbourhood (Braasch 2005, np, emphasis added).

Tuvalu is thus an aid for visualising climate change impacts. A self-described environmentalist visiting Tuvalu for the first time used expressions of fear for her own safety to add weight to her expectation of finding significant climate change damage there:

Before arriving in Tuvalu I admit I was a bit afraid for my safety. From some of what I'd read about Tuvalu I had a quiet, but persistent, background thought - will I be ok? After all, I was heading to the 'frontline' of climate change with sea levels rising, and more pertinently, extreme storms and cyclones increasing in frequency and severity. My fear was compounded by the fact that I was to visit at the worst possible time of year - the middle of the wet season when Tuvalu experiences the worst of its storms. Being surrounded by the media attention placed on the recent tsunami in South East Asia also raised my concerns (Anonymous 2005b, np).⁵¹

⁵¹ This personal reflection was written during an environmentalist project undertaken by its author, and made available to me on the condition that it be used anonymously.

Large, international environmentalist non-government organisations such as WWF⁵², Friends of the Earth⁵³, and Greenpeace have harnessed Tuvalu's image to draw attention to the islands *and* the planet's climate change impacts simultaneously in climate change campaigns. The disappearing island image is prominent, yet it is planetary salvation, and not the protection of Tuvalu in and of itself, that is frequently at the core of such campaigns. In the opinion of the following participant I interviewed, Greenpeace's institutional characteristics can do little to actually assist climate change concerns in Tuvalu (for instance, by implementing promised renewable energy projects):

Interviewer: How do you see the relationships between the Tuvaluan Government and environmental organisations like WWF and Greenpeace - how do you define them and how do you see them benefiting both sides?

P3: At one stage Greenpeace had promised to Prime Minister Paeniu when he was PM that they would make Tuvalu the first renewable energy country and they never delivered on that. And now Greenpeace are trying again with Niue to do the same deal. So I have spoken to Greenpeace about this ... that this has been tried before ... Greenpeace has no institutional memory. It just has a short cycle of interests and a high turnover of staff, so they have no institutional memory.

⁵² WWF's mission statement is:

- To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:
- conserving the world's biological diversity
 - ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
 - promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption (WWF 2008b, np).

⁵³ Friends of the Earth aims to 'campaign on today's most urgent environmental and social issues ... challenge the current model of economic and corporate globalization, and promote solutions that will help to create environmentally sustainable and socially just societies' (Friends of the Earth 2008, np).

A global purpose in witnessing Tuvalu's climate change impacts can also be found in the following extract from a personal reflection written by an environmentalist.⁵⁴ This environmentalist lamented that she did not find much evidence of climate change during her visit to Tuvalu, evidence that would have been useful in her campaign work at home:

Being on the 'frontline' I ... expected to witness some tangible evidence of climate change. Evidence of rising sea levels. Evidence of extreme weather events. Back home, one challenge in my work is the lack of this concrete evidence. Part of the nature of climate change is that it sits within nature's inherent unpredictability and capacity for extreme events. This inability to associate particular climatic events to human caused climate change - because they could always just be 'natural' - creates a challenge in getting people to understand, see and believe in climate change ... My thinking was: If there is any concrete evidence in the world of climate change it would be Tuvalu. And this was my opportunity to see it. A country predicted to disappear in 50 years would surely show some indisputable signs ... In visiting Tuvalu I hoped to discover and reaffirm a purpose for what I do, particularly given the atmosphere of skepticism and uncertainty that sometimes surrounds the issue of climate change. In the course of my stay in Tuvalu, this tangible and convincing evidence I was hunting for seemed to constantly slip from my grasp (and with it, my much desired 'justification' for my work) (Anonymous 2005b, np).

Tuvalu is represented as functioning as a justification for a climate change campaigner's work: the link between the acts of witnessing Tuvalu, and her job promoting understanding and acceptance of a climate change reality among others elsewhere.

⁵⁴ This personal reflection was written during an environmentalist project undertaken by its author, and made available to me on the condition that it be used anonymously. It is the same author mentioned in Footnote 50.

Similarly, non-government organisation Tuvalu Overview, founded by a citizen of Japan, Shuuichi Endou, has a mission to 'increase and promote awareness of Tuvalu's environmental vulnerability to the outside world through awareness campaigns, media promotions, public photo exhibitions, cultural exchanges, eco-tourism' (Tuvalu Overview 2007b, np). One of this organisation's projects is titled 'Build the Future with 10,000 Tuvaluans'. The project's promotional material states:

The project starts from when 10,000 Tuvaluans talk about Tuvalu's future they want to build [sic]. Their future vision will be compiled into books and exhibitions with 10,000 Tuvaluan's [sic] photographs to call for people in the world to cut their emissions. And parts of profits from sales of the books and exhibitions are used for development and adaptation activities in Tuvalu (Tuvalu Overview 2007a, np).

However, a broader purpose is also stated:

Your actions result in supporting to build not only Tuvaluan's future *but also your future* (Tuvalu Overview 2007a, np, emphasis added).

Here, 'your future' is a statement directed at a global audience.

The use of Tuvaluan faces, and Tuvaluan voices, is a strategy also deployed by other environmentalist organisations seeking to raise awareness of climate change's impacts in post-industrial societies. Aware that many in the post-industrialised world will never witness the islands first-hand, Tuvaluans are recruited by environmentalist organisations to act as a personification of the

islands abroad. Travelling to environmentalist fora, or having their words recorded on environmentalist internet sites or documentaries, several attempts to personalise climate change impacts have been made in this way. For example, Siuila Toloa, director of Tuvaluan environmentalist NGO Island Care⁵⁵, was recruited to appear in a Friends of the Earth 2004 Climate Justice Tour in Australia. An extract from her speech indicates how she places herself, as a Tuvaluan directly affected by climate change, in connection with climate change as a global issue:

How often have you heard someone argue that climate change is not their business? That it has no impact on anyone else? Today *I'm here* and I'd like to take a closer look at the problem and show you that if we can all assist in advancing climate change we'll save our Earth, future generations grief and ourselves (Toloa 2004, np emphasis added).

Siuila Toloa has also acted as a WWF South Pacific Climate Witness. The WWF Climate Witness program intends to collate indigenous knowledge of climate change impacts and to raise awareness of such knowledge. A media information night, in which Toloa participated, was reported on the WWF South Pacific website as follows:

Ms Toloa used photographs to describe the observed impacts of climate change on Funafuti in Tuvalu, where she is from. She spoke about how due to prolonged droughts, water was being rationed at the rate of one bucket per family on Funafuti. She showed pictures of people suffering skin diseases due to lack of clean water

⁵⁵ Island Care is a small environmentalist group in Tuvalu engaged in ad-hoc projects such as tree-planting and national awareness-raising on environmental issues such as coastal erosion and waste management.

during droughts. Ms Toloa told the audience that during king tides, roads, houses and garden got flooded by sea water damaging many goods and destroying crops. Siuila was so convincing she inspired all the media present on this night (radio, print, TV, web) to publish excerpts from her presentation (WWF 2008a, np).

Another recruitment of a Tuvaluan to act as a witness of climate change: Taukiei Kitara, Secretary of TuCAN⁵⁶ and Programme Development Officer at Tuvalu Association of Non-Government Organisations (TANGO), was invited and sponsored by Greenpeace to attend a roundtable and silent protest in Hong Kong against China Light and Power, a large coal-fired power company. His participation in these events was also reported on the WWF South Pacific website as part of their Climate Witness program (Kitara 2007b).

In a similar vein, an article appeared on Greenpeace's website from which the following extract was taken. It is a quote from a Tuvaluan pastor, who represents Tuvalu as a space where tensions between global and local climate change causes and impacts are negotiated:

"We have to stand up tall and speak against them and ask them to think also of the smaller countries. We must think globally of what we do locally. We must remind the United States that what they do locally will impact globally on small countries, like Tuvalu. We ask people to stand in solidarity with us," says Reverend Iosefa (Greenpeace Australia Pacific nd, np).

⁵⁶ TuCAN is a non-government organization in Tuvalu. Formed in 2006, its aim is to engage in awareness raising at the community level on issues of climate change. It consists of TANGO (acting as secretariat), EKT, Tuvalu Red Cross, Island Care and Tuvalu Media Corporation. TuCAN has been part of climate change initiatives and meetings regionally and internationally. The organization also aims to become a part of Climate Action Network (CAN) International (Kitara 2007a).

Promoting environmental care of Earth by caring for Tuvalu is summarised in use of the slogan 'we are all Tuvalu'. For example:

The world has the resources and technologies to transition to a more intelligent and sustainable balance. We only require the WILL. We are all Tuvalu (Anonymous 2005b).

The same slogan has also been used elsewhere(see, for example, Hayes 2005; Wilson 2004)⁵⁷. Through such use of metonymy in environmentalist campaigns, Tuvalu is becoming an island showcase of Earth's climate change imperatives. Rising sea levels have become a prompt for Tuvalu's islands to be celebrated as a showcase of future sustainability, a paradise where fossil fuel use has been entirely replaced by renewable energy sources. When I asked 'what will Tuvalu be like in fifteen years' time?', one interview participant's response was:

P4: ... Tuvalu has succeeded in getting rid of oil dependency, living with wind energy, solar energy, biomass energy, biodiesel, biogas [and] the rest of world has understood that they have the responsibility to decrease their carbon emission.⁵⁸

While Tuvalu is currently oil-dependent for much of its electricity and transport use, environmentalists hope to build and offer the world a

⁵⁷ Note Hayes (2005) used an incorrect translation of *Tuvalu mo te atua* as meaning 'we are all Tuvalu' which has now been corrected. *Tuvalu mo te atua* is Tuvalu's national motto and means *Tuvalu for God* or *Tuvalu belongs to God* (Paalo 1981).

⁵⁸ P4 is not Tuvaluan, and describes herself as an environmentalist.

demonstration model for mitigating climate change at a global scale by promoting renewable energies use in Tuvalu.

The selling power of an entire country running on renewable energy is appealing to a Greenpeace representative. Economic benefits to individual countries notwithstanding, the island nation states of the Pacific performed an important demonstrative role in this speaker's imagination:

Pacific nations could [move] to renewable energy before anyone else does. Think about having your entire nation powered by renewable energy. It is not just a science fiction idea, we actually have whole communities powered by renewable energy, nice combinations of technology. And in the Pacific where some nations spend 30% of the GDP on importing diesel it is an economic imperative not just an environment imperative to move to clean energy resources (Fitzpatrick 2004a, np).

Although Tuvalu is not specifically involved, the Climate Institute in the United States is using similar rhetoric in its 'Endangered Islands Campaign: Leveraging the World to Action'. Island populations of St Lucia, Dominica, Grenada and the Marshall Islands are seeking a zero carbon emissions goal. In this campaign, it is posited that 'island states are especially suited to utilize modern renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies due to their economic and geographical conditions' and 'to demonstrate that SIDS can set examples for the bigger and more polluting countries by cutting their greenhouse gas emissions' (Topping 2005, np). Thus, an image of the small island as a sustainability showcase is promoted and the islander is imagined as a potentially exemplary global citizen.

On the other hand, Tuvalu has localised environmental issues such as poor waste and water management which, for some environmentalists, represent a paradise corrupted by Western-style development. In an article titled 'Tension in Paradise: Global Warming and Western Culture Threaten Laid Back Island Life in Tuvalu', Price (2002) sees Tuvalu as representative of 'what happens when traditional island frugality meets the semi-permanent waste of development'. In the following extract, Tuvalu is a showcase for the future, but of global environmental damage and not as a model of sustainability:

In a way, Tuvalu is the planet writ small. Its poor environmental stewardship (which may hasten the effects of global warming) is no more egregious than that of most other, bigger countries. But because it is fragile, remote, resource-poor and low-lying, Tuvalu has less room for error than most other nations. The consequences - and the future - arrive sooner. And with greater force (Allen 2004, 52).

That the inhabitants themselves are implicated in environmental degradation of the islands is a concern among environmentalists, who fear that they are 'corrupting' their pure islander existence with Western consumerism. A review of a book written in Swedish (and thus I have not read it) titled 'SOS Tuvalu' states of the author:

Lyndberg spends most of her time on the island kingdom [sic] of Tuvalu ... She rents a bicycle, but the populace insists on the use of cars and motorcycles ... Where to put all the garbage is also a problem. Too many people live on the island ... it is obvious that the feared [climate change] disaster could in part be blamed for adopting elements of Western lifestyle (Martin 2005, 100).

In this extract, the Western environmentalist on her bicycle replaces the islander as the model global citizen.

What if Tuvalu did sink?

Tuvalu occupies a marginalised position on the world stage, frequently imagined as destined to be aid-dependent. In some environmentalist discourses, representations of Tuvalu are making a leap from Tuvalu as 'marginal' to Tuvalu as 'expendable' in the pursuit of a larger, global, environmentalist purpose. For example, in a 2005 monograph paying unapologetic homage to the success of American cartoon phenomenon *The Simpsons*, the author Chris Turner takes a detour from his main topic in a chapter on the Internet. He argues that if the Internet can change the social world, so too can the world's population make fundamental lifestyle changes needed to combat climate change. Turner writes that his environmentalist project is 'hungry for a metaphor equal in scale to the scope of our planet's environmental crisis' (Turner 2005, 338) and his metaphor of choice is Tuvalu. According to Turner, Tuvalu is an appropriate choice because it is not merely sinking: it is an entire nation on the verge of disappearing. He mobilises the canary in the coalmine image:

Here is the global village reaching out to absorb one of the last remaining unglobalised nooks and crannies of the planet ... here, finally, is the canary in the coal mine of the modern world, a dying bird clinging desperately to its perch to tell us that the whole project might be doomed (Turner 2005, 338).

Turner then expresses a perverse desire to see Tuvalu disappear in order for the planet to be saved:

Tuvalu might do more to combat climate change if the Pacific, swelled by melted ice and agitated by extreme new weather patterns, rose up tomorrow to sink it for good. Might that be enough to make it clear that environmental catastrophe is a real and huge and growing threat to our survival? Because if it is even in the realm of possibility that an entire nation could disappear into the sea as a result of manmade climate change - if this is even remotely possible - then we're obliged to rethink our way of living (Turner 2005, 338).

Another environmentalist echoes Turner's sentiment. In the following extract, Tuvalu is enrolled as a sacrifice to a larger global cause. The sacrifice is barely a reluctant one.

So what if 10,000 people die? I know it sounds harsh. And sure, it'd be a pity. But many more died in the tsunami and many more still die every day due to civil wars, famine, AIDS, malaria, etc ... Moreover, in the course of my visit I learned that in the 1970s there were actually only 500 people on Funafuti, so it's not as though these 10,000 people have been there for very long.⁵⁹ And the culture of the people, while having some nice aspects, didn't grab me as anything especially unique or worthy of 'preserving'. After all most of the traditional cultural heritage was 'destroyed' by Christian missionaries a hundred years ago⁶⁰. In reflecting on all of this a question

⁵⁹ This statement is incorrect. While the population of Tuvalu is approximately 10,000, less than half of these live on Funafuti. Although the author is correct that Funafuti's population has boomed since the 1970s, most have migrated from Tuvalu's outer islands and retain strong *fenua* linkages to those islands.

⁶⁰ According to Besnier (1994a) many anthropologists of Oceania similarly represent Christianity as inauthentic. However, Besnier (1994a, 336 and 339) argues that, on Nukulaelae, 'Christianity on the atoll still retains the imprint of its alien origins ... [but] today, tradition and religion are inseparable' and that 'many social formations and cultural processes in the Pacific cannot be successfully understood without reference to the Christian context in which they are embedded, and, in turn, Christianity in the region can only be

came to mind: what exactly am I trying to 'preserve' in the course of my climate change work? Interestingly the answer I came up with was that what I am trying to preserve is not so much the likes of 'poor sinking Tuvalu' but rather my own sense of WHAT IT IS TO BE A HUMAN BEING (Anonymous 2005b, emphasis in original).

The author is quite self-consciously inserting her fears of climate change for her own Western world and identity in Tuvalu's image, by representing Tuvalu's cultural heritage as inauthentic, bland and not worthy of protection compared to what is at stake elsewhere.

Overall, the foregoing contextualisation of environmentalist islographs of Tuvalu shows that they are structured by a paradox, simultaneously constituting its island space as separate from and yet embedded in wider trajectories of global climate change and sustainability. Such a paradox is embodied in the image of Tuvalu as 'canary in the coalmine' of climate change. The islands of Tuvalu have come to represent a showcase, on the surface apparently serving local purposes for the islanders but simultaneously serving Western and global purposes.

Wishful sinking: Mark Lynas' islograph⁶¹

One of many Westerners who has produced representations of Tuvalu as a space of climate change is environmentalist, journalist and author Mark

studied in tandem with society and culture'. Goldsmith (1985, 162) argues that 'the church ... is a relatively recent introduction but which is now perceived as being Tuvaluan'.

⁶¹ The material on Mark Lynas's islograph in this chapter has been developed from an unpublished conference paper of my own (Farbotko 2006b).

Lynas. Lynas wrote a monograph of popular natural history titled *High tide: News from a Warming World* (Lynas 2004b). It is based on his journey to locations around the world in a 'global quest' for 'the fingerprints of global warming' (Lynas 2004b, xxv). The result is a narrative of a personal voyage to several sites of climate change impact, including a Peruvian glacier, Alaskan villages and Pacific islands. It is informed by scientific research and accounts of the experiences of others that Lynas collected along the way. He was driven by environmentalist concerns - his stated purpose was to contribute to safeguarding the world's future against climate change by increasing awareness of its impacts among the general public. Lynas has also published text and photographs of Tuvalu on the Internet (Lynas 2004a) and had photographs of Tuvalu reproduced in former United States Presidential Candidate and Nobel laureate Al Gore's climate change documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* (Gore 2006) and its accompanying monograph (Gore 2007).

Lynas set out to try and witness what climate change impacts were occurring in Tuvalu and documented his encounter with Funafuti in the chapter of *High tide: News from a Warming World* titled 'Pacific Paradise Lost'. His visit to Tuvalu's capital was motivated by a desire to investigate 'whether the rumours of imminent evacuation [of the Tuvaluan population] were true' (Lynas 2004b, 84). Drawing on the devices of the eyewitness report and the interview, Lynas' narrative seeks to provide evidence of both the physical impacts of climate change on Funafuti's geomorphology and consequent changes in the lives of the people who live there. Examination of his account

reveals an interpretation of Tuvalu that relies on representations of Funafuti atoll as paradoxical space: timeless yet significantly changing, paradisiacal yet fearsome. Lynas' characterisation of Tuvalu mobilises this paradox to reconcile his vision of the islands as imminently threatened by rising sea levels, but its people seemingly oblivious to their fate. For Lynas, Funafuti is a space to fear. The pursuit of everyday activities is perceived to be ubiquitous there but for him such activities seem futile. In representing the islands as on the verge of being lost beneath the ocean, Lynas is able to present his argument to a largely Western audience that serious climate change impacts are present and tangible in Tuvalu, despite a more complex response to the issue among Tuvalu's population. Lynas constructs Funafuti atoll as a paradoxical space, its apparent contradictions reconciled by presenting a captivating, timeless Funafuti as a mere illusion, while climate change is a fearsome reality.

Funafuti as an amphibious, paradoxical coastscape is the islograph of Lynas' encounter. He emphasises the narrowness of the atoll and the ocean's presence is felt throughout the chapter. 'At its widest' writes Lynas, 'Funafuti atoll is little more than five hundred metres across' (Lynas 2004b, 84). On these 'strips of island' (Lynas 2004b, 84), where the lagoon lies on one side and the ocean on the other, life is conducted both in the water and on the land. The ocean is within earshot when not in sight, and the waves and the lagoon function as backdrops when they are not integral elements in Lynas' narrative. Funafuti is closely defined by juxtaposition of the delicate narrow land with the omnipresent ocean, which provides fish for food, opportunities for play

and relaxation, local travel, and relief from the equatorial heat. The atoll is populated with people who lead an 'almost amphibious lifestyle' (Lynas 2004b, 84). Children play in the waves, women chat in the water and an old man visits his pigs by canoe. On the islet of Tepuka Savilivi, away from the urbanised areas of Funafuti, Lynas finds 'a holiday brochure view of paradise: a pristine white beach topped with graceful coconut palms, surrounded by calm blue seas, and without a soul in sight ... I let out a long sigh. This was what I had been waiting for' (Lynas 2004b, 123).

For the most part, however, Lynas encounters a much more mundane atoll. Urbanised Funafuti is a space of cars and motorbikes, barbecues, football and church-going. Lynas finds the heat almost unbearable and the narrow fragility of the land unsettling. He shudders to think of 'how it must feel to be stuck there with a hurricane bearing down' (Lynas 2004b, 84). His overwhelming reaction is that 'nothing much happens in Tuvalu' but his response to this lack of activity on Funafuti swings between two extremes: 'for a while I found this charming, then it drove me crazy, and then, just as I was about to leave, I began to find it charming again (Lynas 2004b, 81). Here is a space of paradoxes, a liminal zone where the configuration of water, land and climate make life both paradisiacal and oppressive, a space simultaneously captivating and fearsome. This construction of Funafuti in terms of contradictions is further emphasised by a temporal paradox - Funafuti is both timeless and changing. Funafuti's rhythms seem 'isolated from the clamour of a rapidly changing outside world' (Lynas 2004b, 81), but such an image is only 'on the surface' (page 81). Funafuti has the superficial appearance of being 'eternal -

the people, the sands and the sea - all destined to stay here unchanged far into the future' (page 124) and 'it seems like life has tripped by at this gentle pace for centuries, and will continue to do so for centuries more' (page 81). Yet Lynas insists that the timelessness is only an illusion. Funafuti's reality is defined foremost by the devastating impacts of climate change, which are slowly making it an uninhabitable space. With 'global sea ... levels creeping up' (page 82) the inexorable pace of climate change is insidious, complicit in the construction of the illusion of timelessness on the atoll.

Nevertheless, Lynas was perplexed by the appearance of normal life going on around him when he arrived on Funafuti. Although he felt under no misapprehension that 'evacuation' would mean 'a queue of people standing desperately next to the airstrip waiting for the next plane out' (Lynas 2004b, 90), he was surprised that road crews were busily improving the atoll's infrastructure, and that there were plans to build a new government office. Even with the onset of the year's highest tides around which his visit was scheduled, when sea-water welled up through the atoll and flooded certain areas, children played in the water as usual and a barbecue was prepared in knee-deep water. Various long term inhabitants of Funafuti attest that these tidal events have increased in severity in recent years, pointing also to evidence that their crops are now being damaged by salty water and that islets are disappearing under the ocean.

Lynas is not the only visitor to observe the high tides. Their occurrence has attracted many journalists and others interested in gaining visual evidence of

climate change impacts in recent years. Images of large waves breaking against the shore of Funafuti have been circulated around the world in photographs, through descriptions and on film. The title of Lynas' book is indeed suggestive that high tides symbolize climate change. The image of water transgressing inter-tidal zones and encroaching on the land presents a challenge to constructed boundaries between the present and the future of climate change devastation. For Lynas, there is poignancy in the high tides as children frolic amid rising sea levels. When the king tides come, the kids of Funafuti 'would periodically disappear in a mass of flying foam and spray each time one of the bigger waves hit the wall' (Lynas 2004b, 96).

Lynas (2004b) does not consider panic among the Tuvaluan community to be a sensible response to climate change. However, for him the continuation of normal life on Funafuti, quite literally through the waters of the high tides, is an indication that the issue of climate change is not accorded a sufficient sense of urgency in Tuvalu. He perceives that the inhabitants of Funafuti, including Government officials, are concerned about climate change. However, on reflection, he considers that use of the emotive term 'evacuation' would lend the problem a greater significance. Lynas' sense of urgency does not seem to relate to any immediate survival needs for the people of Funafuti. Rather, it pertains to the message he wants to send to the national governments of populations responsible for large quantities of greenhouse gas emissions. Although Lynas acknowledges that Tuvaluan leaders have highlighted their climate change concerns in international fora, he effectively urges the inhabitants of a small atoll country, with neither political clout or extensive

human and natural resources, to shoulder a global political burden. He wants the people of Funafuti to display a sense of urgency in response to climate change imperatives, which may, as Lynas recognises, possibly contribute to unnecessary panic among them.

Lynas attempts to legitimise a binary choice for Tuvalu's inhabitants: 'to move, and live cultureless and uprooted in a foreign country, or stay on the land of their forefathers and die' (Lynas 2004b, 82-83). In imagining displacement from sea level rise as the death of culture, 'migration' can come to mean 'the extinction of an entire island country and its way of life' (Lynas 2004b, 92). By implication, for Lynas, loss of land and sovereignty results in a loss of distinct identity. The view that loss of land erases identity is reinforced in Lynas' appeal to the Tuvaluan concept of *fakaalofa* (page 100). Meaning 'deserving of pity', it is the label that Tuvaluans attach to those without customary land rights. It is questionable, however, whether losing land and sovereignty, though profoundly significant, necessitates a loss of culture and identity entirely. Lynas' territorializing of Tuvaluan identity contrasts with the testimony of Tuvaluans in his account who speak of any relocation as a matter of cultural survival and not extinction. Yet Lynas finds the rising sea levels the defining feature of island life. While he never goes so far as to state a desire for the islands to become uninhabitable, as Turner (2005) does, Lynas' desire for 'disappearing islands' of Tuvalu to be *almost* uninhabitable is clear. For Lynas, rising seas in Tuvalu in the present are a pertinent symbol of climate change to the rest of the world. He wants to appeal to a sense of compassion for the people of Tuvalu.

That a voyeuristic, rather than a compassionate, element may be present in how representations of sinking islands are interpreted needs to be taken into account. In climate change discourses, there is observable a race to report the *first* island to disappear. Tuvalu is not the only small island space to be involved. For example, in the Australian Red Cross 'Humanitarian' Magazine, the following extract on climate change in Vanuatu appeared:

In what is being touted as a first, the Canadian Government, in partnership with the South Pacific Regional Environment Program and the UN, have provided funds for the relocation of Chief Reuben's village [further inland on Tegua Island, Vanuatu] (Bohane 2006, 9).

Similarly:

New Zealand film makers are to document the last days of the tiny Polynesian island of Takuu [near Papua New Guinea] before it slips beneath the waves ... Tectonic activity [not anthropogenic climate change] at the junction of the Pacific and Australian continental plates means the island is sinking 20cm a year. Its disappearance is being viewed as a dummy run for other low-lying Pacific islands, as sea levels rise due to global warming (Meylan 2006, np).

In British newspaper *The Independent*, there are claims that two other 'firsts' have been reported in that publication: the disappearance of an uninhabited island, and the disappearance of an inhabited island:

For the first time, an inhabited island has disappeared beneath rising seas. Rising seas, caused by global warming, have for the first time washed an inhabited island

off the face of the Earth. The obliteration of Lohachara island, in India's part of the Sundarbans where the Ganges and the Brahmaputra rivers empty into the Bay of Bengal, marks the moment when one of the most apocalyptic predictions of environmentalists and climate scientists has started coming true ... Eight years ago, as exclusively reported in The Independent on Sunday, the first uninhabited islands - in the Pacific atoll nation of Kiribati - vanished beneath the waves (Lean 2006, page).

Also observable is a race to report the first 'climate change refugees':

The island nation is slowly being inundated as the ocean rises, and some citizens are fleeing. How will the world handle a flood of "climate refugees"? (Berzon 2006, np).

In the latest in a series of reports from places where concerns about climate change are already having an impact, reporter Ali Berzon traveled to New Zealand.

Residents of the Pacific Island nation of Tuvalu have been moving there, *and some consider themselves the world's first climate refugees* (Living on Earth 2006, np, emphasis added).

In fact this claim is misleading as no Tuvaluan in the full transcript of this radio program mentions the word 'refugee'.⁶²

Clearly, the idea of an island disappearing is of interest to Western audiences. Lynas' desire for 'disappearing islands' of Tuvalu to be *almost* uninhabitable is achieved by ample use of exaggeration. Consider the following statement made in a media report by Lynas (2004a, np): 'For six months of the year

⁶² This is not to say, however, that Tuvaluans are not inclined at times to use the term. An example appears in the report of a disaster preparedness workshop in Tuvalu in 1991, where a staff member of the Meteorological Department stated 'today we will talk about the Greenhouse Effect and mind you, in the next three years we may be the ecological refugees ... , environmental refugees ... , who knows?' (Taomia 1991, 22).

some Tuvaluans now have wet feet at high tide'. This statement was accompanied by a photograph of two men and a child standing in knee-deep water on Funafuti, one of the men attending a barbecue. It is a visual and hence seemingly authoritative piece of evidence of the depths of high tides, apparently for six months of the year. Appearing on a UNESCO website, such an article would lend the claim even more credibility to many readers, and yet, it is a highly exaggerated version of Tuvalu's high tide events.

Such high tides, where it would be possible for a barbecue to occur in knee-deep water, in fact only occur two or three times a year (depending on lunar cycles), and only for a few days at a time. They are not an almost daily occurrence, as the photograph and its caption suggest. In 2006, for instance, king tides caused floods on Funafuti in January, February and March that lasted for about four hours, twice on each of nine days. In January, one family on the capital was evacuated from its flooded home for several days, and was given temporary accommodation in the Red Cross Headquarters. The rest of the time, however, there is minimal flooding on the atoll, and daily life is not conducted in knee-deep water.

In the following extract, from the same UNESCO article, Lynas' desire for the islands to be almost uninhabitable is clearly demonstrated. He hints that the Tuvaluan official he interviewed on climate change was only using the term 'migration' as political whitewash for what was really an evacuation plan, his own interpretation that suited his environmentalist agenda:

"We couldn't just sit back and do nothing," Panapase told me, as we sat in a small office in the one-story white-painted building which houses most of Tuvalu's national government. "So far we have received approval from New Zealand to allow seventy-five people a year to go there." This is not an 'evacuation', he insisted, but more of a 'migration plan'. Either way, Tuvalu's 11,300 inhabitants are about to start leaving their homes (Lynas 2004a, np).

Lynas' representations have been mobilised by others to convey a message that Tuvalu has, in fact, already disappeared - clearly incorrectly. This conveyance occurs in Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* (Gore 2006). Discussing the Arctic ice cap and Antarctica, Gore states that the impacts of climate change seem to be faster in the polar regions than anywhere else: melting perma-frost and ice shelves result from warming temperatures. To explain the significance of the melting ice at the earth's northern and southern poles, he says, almost dismissively:

That's why the citizens of these Pacific nations have all had to evacuate to New Zealand. But I want to focus on West Antarctica ... (Gore 2006).

This statement is a mere aside to Gore's chief environmentalist concern, namely, saving the entire planet from climate change impacts. In the documentary, Gore's statement was accompanied by some grainy photographs of an apparently unidentified Pacific island in flood, featuring people wading through knee-deep water. Gore does not name the island in the photographs nor does he specify which Pacific island nation's citizens 'have all had to evacuate to New Zealand'. The photographs are indeed of Funafuti, and were taken by Mark Lynas during his visit there - they are copies of some of those

published in his book and are credited to Lynas at the end of *An Inconvenient Truth*.⁶³ Was it ‘an inconvenient truth’ for Gore that Tuvalu’s citizens have not, in fact, all migrated to New Zealand? Moments after the photos are shown in the documentary, Gore claims that the issue of climate change is the same for the population in China as for that of the United States. He laments the problem of old, polluting technologies such as coal-fired power stations. A translator is shown asking for suggestions on what the Chinese can do to help the situation. Gore states, apparently without irony, to an audience that looks like a group of university students:

Separating the truth from the fiction and the accurate connections from the misunderstandings is part of what you learn here. But when the warnings are accurate, and based on sound science, then we as human beings, whatever country we live in, have to find a way to make sure that the warnings are heard and responded to [applause] (Gore 2006, emphasis added).

Gore effectively sidelines Tuvalu and other similarly geographically situated island places in several ways. He uses disappearing islands as a warning, bringing forward the date of the island disaster to a time apparently already past, and asserting that what he says can be relied on as ‘truth’. He produces climate change debate as having two key arenas: on the one hand developed nation states, on the other large developing nations. The combined effect of his islograph is to sideline, by erasing their very present and future in an influential documentary, small islands where fossil fuel industries are not

⁶³ In the monograph that accompanies the documentary, Gore (2007) correctly captions a photograph of Funafuti in flood, and refrains from stating that an entire nation state’s population has migrated to New Zealand.

powerful economic forces. For Gore, the disappearing islands are most useful if they have already disappeared.⁶⁴

Sustainable paradise: Alofa Tuvalu's islograph

Another group, largely comprising Westerners, who have produced representations of Tuvalu as a space of climate change is Alofa Tuvalu, which self-identifies as an environmentalist organisation. Alofa Tuvalu's name was adopted because its members believe it means 'to love Tuvalu', however the phrase can also be translated as 'to feel sorry for Tuvalu'. The organisation had its genesis in the production of a documentary on Tuvalu called *The Disappearing of Tuvalu: Trouble in Paradise* (Horner and Le Gallic 2004). Film-makers Gilliane le Gallic from France and Christopher Horner from the United States travelled to Tuvalu in 2003 to document climate change impacts there. According to the organisation's promotional material, 'Alofa Tuvalu association's President [Le Gallic] is a director and environmentalist. Since the shooting of "Trouble in Paradise" in 2003, she's dedicating herself to Tuvalu' (Alofa Tuvalu nd-a, np). The organisation was born 'from the will to save Tuvalu, the first nation to be threatened to be submerged due to climate change [and] the symbol of what awaits us all if we do nothing to stop global warming (Alofa Tuvalu nd-a, np).

⁶⁴ *An Inconvenient Truth* was not the first time Gore has politically neglected the climate change issues of small low-lying islands. He was berated in an article in *Pacific Islands Monthly*, in a report on the UN Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States:

Organisers had been hoping that vice-president Al Gore, who has made much of his green credentials, would come. He did not, perhaps for fear of being overshadowed and embarrassed by the other star of the conference, Fidel Castro (Williams 1994, 7).

Le Gallic was already an active environmentalist when she founded Alofa Tuvalu. On the organisation's website, she claims responsibility for initiating the Earth Day program in French-speaking countries. However, it seems that Le Gallic experienced an even more profound awakening to global action during the act of witnessing and documenting the people and place of Tuvalu during her first visit there to produce 'Trouble in Paradise'. Alofa Tuvalu's promotional material has a distinctly salvational tone, pitched at an ambitious global scale and for a global audience:

Because we are all Tuvaluans, ALOFA TUVALU nourishes the ambition to contribute to an active global movement through a set of concrete and reproducible actions on the archipelago. Their reproduction will give us as many tools to preserve our environment, and hopes of a solution for all of us (Alofa Tuvalu nd-a, np).

Similarly, repeating the metonymic slogan 'we are all Tuvalu':

Today global warming is a widely recognized fact and human responsibility makes [sic] no doubt anymore. Tuvalu is the first sovereign nation faced with becoming totally uninhabitable within the next 50 years. Faced with this impending catastrophe, we must act now. We are ALL Tuvalu ... and the clock is ticking (Alofa Tuvalu nd-a, np) .

Tuvalu as 'sustainability showcase' is Alofa Tuvalu's islograph.

Tuvalu is represented as disappearing, an imminent tragedy. Yet in the salvation of Tuvalu the salvation of the planet as a whole is embodied. Representations of the islands as a showcase of sustainability connect Tuvalu as 'disappearing islands' to Tuvalu as planetary environmental showcase.

Tuvalu is being recruited as a space which prompts non-islanders to act on climate change issues.

According to Alofa Tuvalu, excessive consumption of nature's resources, particularly by populations in the industrialised world, is to blame for Tuvalu's climate change impacts:

While becoming more conscious of our individual effect on the environment, particularly regarding climatic changes, our standard of living still takes precedence when it comes to our actual behaviour. In Europe, without forethought or political directive, to deal with a summer heat-wave, we invest in air conditioners, the ozone layer's worst enemy. In the US, arguing with their opponents, SUV owners insist on their individual liberty, seemingly oblivious - or simply not caring - that this "freedom" is endangering the lives of other humans on the planet (Alofa Tuvalu nd-b, 2).

Alofa Tuvalu's argument is that the planet's population needs to learn how to consume less in order to attain, or re-establish, a global, sustainable equilibrium between production and consumption. The question becomes one of reconciling a lost link between environmental values and daily life.

Tuvaluans are enrolled as model citizens for learning to regain this lost link.

Their islands are appropriated by Alofa Tuvalu as a sustainability showcase for achieving such a task. Apparently inconceivably complex at the global scale, the quest for sustainability, particularly in the context of climate change and renewable energy use, is imagined to be more easily attainable in Tuvalu.

Alofa Tuvalu operates on an assumption that resource flows are more controllable on Tuvalu's small islands and that a culture of consumption can

be more easily reversed there, because their inhabitants are more 'traditional' and live closer to 'nature' than those in the West:

Tuvalu, a tiny and extremely low-lying nation, is the epitome of vulnerability. It is also, due to its small size, recent habits of consumption, and traditional relationship with nature, a perfect candidate for becoming the first country to operate in harmony with the environment, an environmental showcase of the earth, a living ideal for the planet to emulate. A way for this new Atlantis to leave a positive mark on our planet (Alofa Tuvalu nd-b, 3).

The appeal to the lost island of Atlantis is telling: Alofa Tuvalu intends a future mythological status for Tuvalu to be as entrenched as that of Atlantis. Although not explicitly detailed in Alofa Tuvalu's ten-year plan, the organisation's slogan 'small is beautiful' indicates an assumption that smallness equates with manageability, the inverse of largeness equating with complexity. For Alofa Tuvalu, it is the task of achieving a harmonious relationship between a culture and a nature that seems more manageable on islands. Le Gallic certainly drew on this idea as a foundational assumption underlying her work when I interviewed her, and she indicated that her anonymity did not need to be maintained. The first thing I asked her to describe was her professional role and she responded thus:

I wear a double hat. I am a Director/Producer for television and also the hat of an environmentalist. And I am working for a project called 'Small is Beautiful' whose objective is to help Tuvalu become the nation most respectful of environment, so that it could be duplicated elsewhere ... I am responsible for the project itself ... after I came here to do the film I thought what can we do to help beyond basically the

positive communication idea. 'Small is beautiful' - it's small enough, not that it means it's easy, but it's small enough to be feasible.

The task of reducing consumption of fossil fuels is aimed at benefiting Tuvalu and its inhabitants. But, the solutions achieved on island are also intended to be reproduced at the global scale for the benefit of the entire global population. Such a process, focussed on mainstreaming renewable energies, would mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and thus lessen climate change impacts:

Operating on the basis that Tuvalu is a microcosm of the threat that we all face in the near or long term ... a model of 'environmental sanity' and greater self-sufficiency would not only create the most positive kind of example to the world, it would also solve some of Tuvalu's most pressing waste and energy problems. The idea is to start from this tiny example to develop a program of constructive action - one which is replicable and likely to garner the necessary media attention (Alofa Tuvalu nd-b, 2).

The idea of an island in harmony with nature that Tuvalu seems to promise stands relationally with an island planet in Alofa Tuvalu's islograph. As the planet literally begins to consume Tuvalu materially, its existence continues symbolically. Embodying a future of global environmental destruction, Tuvalu becomes a symbol of the planet as a whole. This message is broadcast via Alofa Tuvalu's strategic media campaign:

Based on a positive, unifying and concrete program: assisting Tuvalu, as its own destruction approaches, to become an environmental showcase - a living, breathing,

replicable model of an environmentally respectful and exemplary nation - is a compelling means for Tuvalu to leave both a vital message and an important legacy to the world (Alofa Tuvalu nd-b, 1).

Sustainable showcase imagery, serving the planet as a whole, recurs as a consistent theme in Alofa Tuvalu's representations of Tuvalu, a function of the team's experience in publicity and media. Sarah Hemstock, a renewable technologies specialist who works with Alofa Tuvalu, has stated 'if a sustainable, environmentally respectful society can't be created here, it can't be done anywhere' (Leahy 2007, np). The 'Amatuku Micro Model' is a sub-project of Small is Beautiful. Located on the tiny islet where Tuvalu's Maritime Training School is located (and from which visitors from other parts of Funafuti are strictly regulated by the Captain of the school) will be the construction of biogas digester units - a renewable energy source - aimed to become 'the example to be reproduced nationwide on the 9 islands of the archipelago' (Alofa Tuvalu nd-a, np). Amatuku has also been called 'the pilot islet: a micro-model for sustainable development using Renewable Energy ... [a] showroom for Tuvaluans and other Pacific Nations'. Amatuku, it appears, is a showcase for Tuvalu, the showcase for the planet connected through relations of gigantism and miniaturisation (McMahon 2003). The organisation has also produced a cartoon booklet for children entitled *Our planet under water: Let's save Tuvalu and all disappearing island nations* (Kent et al. 2006) (Figure 3).

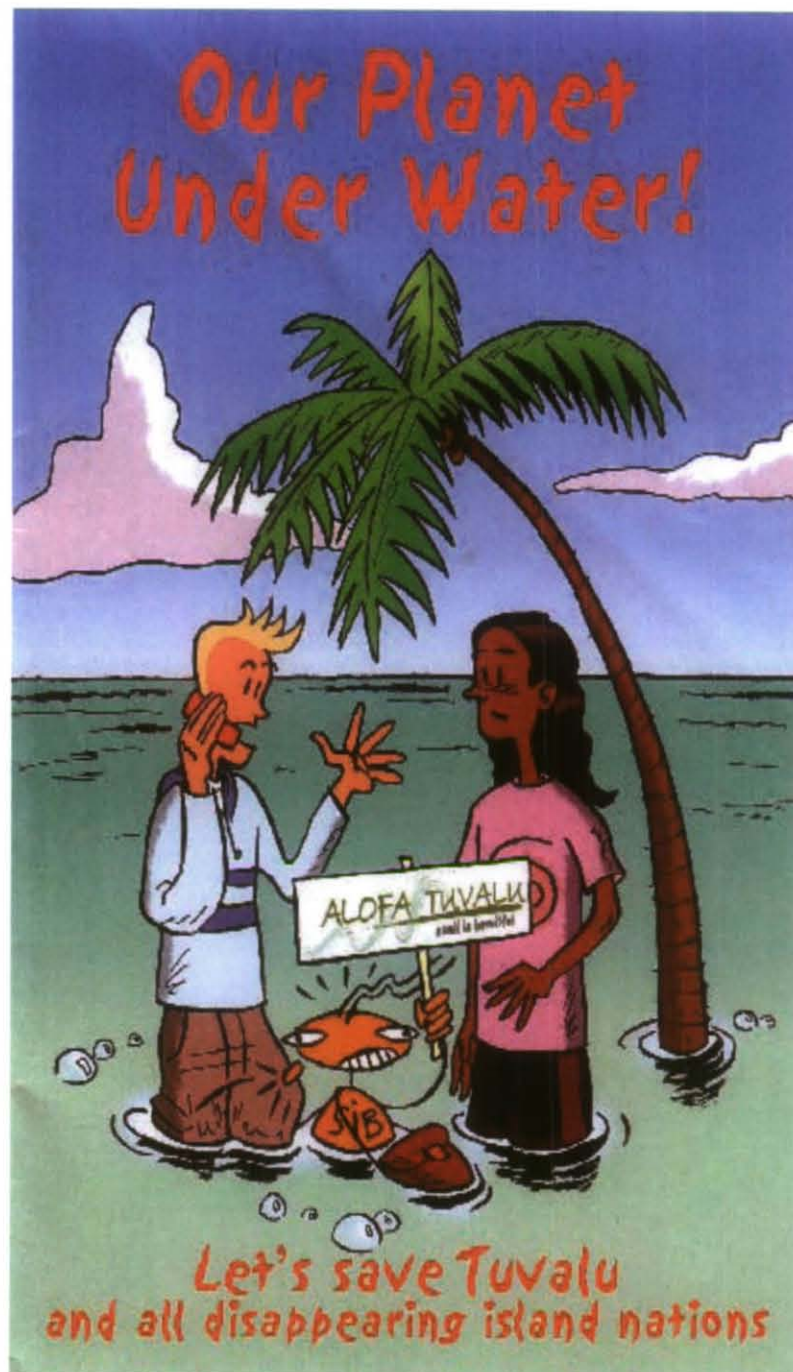


Figure 3: Front cover 'Our planet under water: Let's save Tuvalu and all disappearing island nations'

(Source: Kent et al. 2006, np)

The booklet contained the following poem, in which Tuvalu's fate and the fate of planet Earth are conflated:

What's happening to Tuvalu
Victims of me and you
They're slowly going to be
Under the waters of the sea

As the waves hit the shore
None of us can ignore
That Tuvalu is sinking
What are we thinking?

If you really want to
You can save Tuvalu
With a solemn promise
Humanity can progress

Dreams can come true
We can save Tuvalu
Every act we do
Is for them, is for you

On the Alofa Tuvalu homepage is a photograph of sunlight shining on aqua water, a tropical landscape in the distance, and the slogan 'Helping to save Tuvalu means helping to save your world too', which is repeated on each page of the organisation's website. Clicking on a link to Tuvalu's 'identity card' on the website, reveals the title 'A nation in the process of disappearing' and the following text:

Named the only nation in the world above reproach for human rights violations by a panel of observers in June 1998, Tuvalu is also the earth's first sovereign nation

faced with becoming totally uninhabitable due to global-warming related flooding within the next 50 years. Its 11,000 citizens are thus threatened with becoming the planet's first entire nation of environmental refugees (Alofa Tuvalu nd-a, np).

Alofa Tuvalu is keen to represent Tuvaluans as heroes. Using an apparently excellent human rights record⁶⁵, and minimal contribution to global pollution to characterise the island's inhabitants, Alofa Tuvalu attempts portray Tuvaluans in opposition to over-consumers of the industrialised world.

When le Gallic and Horner went to Tuvalu to make their documentary, it was this 'virtuous population' that they sought to capture on film, harnessing stereotypical ideals of Polynesian paradise. Instead, they found waste management problems, and enthusiasm for motorcycles, electronic goods and packaged drinks among the population. In order to reconcile this apparent paradox of paradise and modernity, Le Gallic and Horner essentialised consumerism in Tuvalu as an invading, corruptive, imperial force. Le Gallic stated in our interview:

The youth even though they don't have television they see what is happening in the films. They are changing the culture. Luckily they don't have McDonald's yet and I don't think they ever will. But it's invasion of other culture. Although you still can feel the tradition and traditional way of life ... if they go on wanting to be like all the other countries ... but it seems like we are realizing that we went too far.

⁶⁵ Tuvalu is not always considered completely above reproach for human rights violations:

[While] The Government [of Tuvalu] generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provided effective means of addressing individual instances of abuse ... traditional customs and social behaviors considered as important as the law led to some social discrimination. Women traditionally occupy a subordinate role, with limits on their job opportunities (Bureau of Democracy 2004, np).

Le Gallic also encountered attitudes to resource use among Tuvalu's inhabitants that did not fit squarely with her environmentalist viewpoint. She stated a colonialist desire to educate Tuvaluans to change their resource-use practices:

[Tuvalu's inhabitants] have to realise and they have to act too ... They are not agricultural people. Here, you know, coconuts just fall down, breadfruit fall down, fish is just here. So they have to learn - not a new way of life but a new way of acting.

Overall, however, Alofa Tuvalu expounds what has been called a profligacy discourse on climate change that 'puts the blame ... squarely at the door of the industrialised world. It is here that the carbon economy has run riot, encouraging wasteful consumption patterns' (Adger et al. 2001, 699). The way to avert global catastrophe, according to this discourse, is by tackling over-consumption, especially in the industrialised world. Alofa Tuvalu uses Tuvalu and its inhabitants to attempt to showcase that 'it is the profligacy of the North which causes the global environmental problem, while the poor of the South are [paradoxically] both victims and heroes (Adger et al. 2001, 704). Le Gallic is quoted in a media report saying Tuvaluans wish to 'become a model of an environmentally respectful nation ... I think Tuvalu can be a powerful symbol and example to the world' (Leahy 2007, np).

In Alofa Tuvalu's islographs of Tuvalu as sustainable showcase, Tuvalu is produced as a space where a politics of climate change on-island is also a

politics of climate change for the planet as a whole. Tuvalu is represented as a microcosm of Earth. On one hand, the idea of island sustainability facilitates an idea of bounty in the islandscape, a belief that nature's endowments within the island are the parameters of a bounteous but modest level of consumption which provides a measure against which over-consumption elsewhere might also be judged and addressed. Such an islograph contrasts markedly with those in which Tuvalu is a space of intrinsic scarcity, illustrated in reference to geographer John Connell's (1980a; 1980b) work in Chapter One: where an independent modern nation state cannot be realised because the island provides only for subsistence existences and dependence on industrialised nation states.

Both islographs, however, are attempts to represent Tuvalu as a space of self-sufficiency, the primary purposes of which are not concern for Tuvalu in and of itself, but for the simultaneous limiting of resource flows elsewhere. While environmentalists celebrate the islands of Tuvalu as an environmental showcase of renewable energy in particular and sustainability in a more general sense, economic commentators disparage Tuvalu as intrinsically resource-scarce. Tuvalu thus comes to represent, in hopes and fears of different groups in the industrialised world, a paradoxical space of sustainability and scarcity, where Western anxieties over related issues of consumption, resources and climate change are being played out.

Chapter summary

Tuvalu is being represented in new ways as a space of climate change in environmental campaigns, as the 'disappearing islands' at the frontiers of climate change's global impacts. Islographs of Tuvalu that were analysed in detail in this chapter were Mark Lynas' popular science narrative *High Tide* and various activities of environmental non-government organisation Alofa Tuvalu. By examining these and other competing, ambiguous and supporting islographs, I have demonstrated that Tuvalu's environmental islographs are structured by Western islographic characteristics: by a paradox that simultaneously constitutes its island space as separate to and yet embedded in trajectories of environmental change. Such a paradox is embodied in a recurring image of Tuvalu as 'canary in the coalmine' of climate change, that allows Western fears of global climate change impacts to be embodied in the Tuvalu islands. In some environmentalist islographs, such as those of Chris Turner and Al Gore, Tuvalu is emerging as expendable space in the pursuit of planetary salvation.

Chapter 5: Journalist islographs

Introduction

In this chapter, I use the concept of the islograph to analyse a selection of representations of Tuvalu produced by a range of individuals and groups who claim a journalistic stake in Tuvalu as climate change space. I define 'journalists' broadly as those individuals and groups, and the organisations with which they are affiliated, who are centrally concerned with public reporting on the world in ways that are purportedly 'truthful', 'objective' or 'independent'. I include in the broad definition of 'journalism' works by professional academics that are published outside the arena of scholarly peer-review. Just like any other representations of islands, journalist engagements with the category 'island' are islographic, and they reflect the power and interests of the individuals or groups associated with their production. Reports in newspapers, magazines and Internet sites that focus on 'the truth' about Tuvalu's 'disappearing islands' are foci for examining such roles.

My analysis of journalist representations of Tuvalu suggests that, like environmentalist representations, a large number of them originate in Western and/or post-industrial societies. Thus again I assess whether the paradoxical space of islands and the idea of islands as imaginative geographies are observable in journalist islographs.

In this chapter, I first contextualise Tuvalu's journalist islographs. Second, I analyse one islograph of Tuvalu in detail: *Sydney Morning Herald* news reports, where, as the islands disappear, Tuvaluans are transformed into environmental refugees and yet Western tourists are urged to turn a voyeuristic eye towards the sinking islands.

Islographs in journalism

Representations of Tuvalu among journalists are, as I will demonstrate in this section, frequently produced in efforts to establish climate change 'truths'. Many foreign journalists, researchers, environmentalists and documentary-makers (many of whom claim more than one of these identities) arrive during Tuvalu's high tides to report on climate change, and in particular, to gather for their audience evidence of whether the islands of Tuvalu are indeed sinking. Tuvalu's busiest time for visitors, the high tides are captured on moving and still film. Time-delay cameras set up on the most flooded spots on Funafuti, and images of waves breaking over narrow points on the island make for dramatic images. Locals are interviewed.

As I will demonstrate with reference to a number of journalist islographs in this section, encroachment of sea water onto land in Tuvalu is highly contested and various conflicting truth claims are made about Tuvalu's climate change impacts. Flooding, storm surges, coastal erosion, and salt-water infiltration into *pulaka* pits are maintained by some to undoubtedly be indications of sea level rise; others are equally vehement that sea level rise is

not happening; while still others remain uncertain either way. There are those who are convinced that climate change induced sea level rise is a distant concern, while others are convinced it is an imminent catastrophe. Some maintain that encroachment of water onto land is a new phenomenon, others emphasise that it has long been a problem.

For example, in a media report which relies on local, eye-witness evidence as authority for its truth claim, encroachment of water onto land is mapped directly to climate change-related sea level rise:

The rising sea is eating at the shores of low-lying Funafuti, a small mound of coral and coconut palms in the remote Pacific, midway between Hawaii and Australia. Nervous islanders watch as fingers of ocean travel beneath the sands, resurfacing inland in startling places. 'It used to be puddles, now it's like lakes' said Hilea Vavae, local meteorologist. People were especially worried when the runway flooded. 'That's new' Margaret Bita told a visiting reporter after Sunday church services (Hanley 2004, np).

In another account, an author argues that changes in land and water configurations in Tuvalu cannot be attributed to anything but local human activity, and thus cannot be attributed to climate change-related sea level rise:

Is Tuvalu slowly being washed into the sea? Yes, in places it is, but the cause is not excess CO₂ in the atmosphere, nor is it rising sea levels ... Tuvalu is eroding because humans have changed the shape of the reef flat around two of the major islands, and the ocean is slowly reshaping the islands to re-establish the ancient balance between the reef flat, the islands, the waves, the winds, and the currents. Is salt water intruding into the 'pulaka' pits? Yes, but again not because of CO₂ or sea levels. It is

happening because the replenishment of the fresh water lens has been drastically reduced by the building of rainwater tanks and the paving of a large part of the island. Much of the rainwater that used to replenish the land is now flowing into the sea (Eschenbach 2004b, 541).

The foregoing account was based on an appeal to complex physical processes on Funafuti. Its author argued for a localised view of physical change. He used appeals to objective, scientific rigour in order to answer the questions: 'what is happening in Tuvalu? Is the sea level really rising?' (Eschenbach 2004b, 528). The account is an attempt to establish his interpretation of changes in Funafuti as truth based on objective, rigorous science. Eschenbach's account drew on, and directly argued against, another account of sea level rise in Tuvalu based on tide gauge measurements, which stated:

A cautious estimate of present long-term sea-level change at Funafuti, Tuvalu, which uses all the data, is a rate of 0.8 ± 1.9 mm per year relative to the land. This indicates that there is about a 68% probability of the rate of rise being between -1.1 and 2.7 mm per year (Hunter 2002, 2).

This account was commissioned by environmental organisation Greenpeace, the research completed by oceanographer John Hunter, and published on the Internet. It can be read as an attempt to answer the question 'is sea level already rising'? The answer provided by Hunter was far from certain, increased certainty being postponed to the future when more data would be available:

Accurate estimates of sea-level rise at Funafuti will have to wait until a longer span of data has been collected. It is important that a continuing record of sea level be collected (Hunter 2002, 15).

In contrast, Eschenbach was concerned with correcting what he perceived as 'Greenpeace [putting] considerable weight behind a claim [that climate change exists and causes sea level rise] with no scientific foundation' (Eschenbach 2004b, 542). Applying his own scientific analysis, he argued that he could consequently know 'the real cause of [Tuvalu's] problems' (Eschenbach 2004b, 541).

Further debate between Eschenbach and Hunter unfolded (Eschenbach 2004a; Hunter 2004). I interviewed John Hunter on this debate and he pointed out that Eschenbach's two articles, in an academic journal, were opinion pieces only. Published in a journal called *Energy & Environment* they seem to be standard, peer-reviewed scientific papers. However, it is only in the editorial at the beginning of the issue in which Eschenbach's first article appears that the editors indicate Eschenbach's paper is an opinion piece (Boehmer-Christiansen and Love 2004). This editorialising conflicts with standard academic practice in which commentary and opinion pieces are flagged as such on their heading page and in the journal's table of contents. Hunter's original study, was in fact put through an independent peer-review process by Greenpeace, even though being made available on the Internet and not under the auspices of a scientific journal, it was not represented as peer-reviewed science. Thus are some of the truth claims about sea level rise made and contested.

In comparison with Eschenbach's questionable claim that Tuvalu's changes are local, some accounts of Tuvalu emphasise a future of sea level rise as a climate change impact, but *also* as an exacerbation of existing local conditions:

The first effects of rising sea level [associated with climate change] will not be new to Tuvalu. Construction of the Funafuti airstrip by American forces in the Second World War destroyed the *lens* of fresh water in the coral rock substrata; ancient pits filled with vegetable mulch for the growing of root crops (*pulaka*) in otherwise infertile coral sand were the first to show the effects of consequent salination. This has been worsening since and with a rise in sea level will exacerbate ... Neither is sea water flooding a new phenomenon; at the twice yearly high tides of February and September parts of the densely populated Funafuti atoll are flooded to depths of up to 0.6 m.⁶⁶ Traditional house forms provided a floor level 1 m off the ground, appropriate to land prone to flooding. New "western" house styles introduced concrete floors at ground level and displaced outmoded traditional forms of habitation (Lewis 1989, 271).

This account was written around the time that climate change was first being identified as a significant future risk for low lying islands in the late 1980s. The problem of salt-water infiltration into pulaka pits was investigated under the auspices of the South Pacific Commission as early as the 1970s. The investigation followed complaints from inhabitants of Tuvalu's islands that some of their pits were becoming unproductive, thought to be due to

⁶⁶ Similar flooding events were noted by Airport Consulting and Construction Australia and Mellor (1987), which contained photographs of high tide flooding around Funafuti's airstrip and stated:

Tidal flooding of the airstrip and other low lying parts of the island occurs on infrequent occasions due to higher than normal tides ... only occasionally (once or twice per year) does water encroach onto the runway (Airport Consulting and Construction Australia and Mellor 1987, 14).

contamination of the soil caused by saltwater intrusion (Dunn 1977). One peer-reviewed scholarly account considers that sea level rise associated with climate change is part of a complex set of processes that affect the high tides:

Although high tide levels could have been affected by climate conditions such as enhanced trade wind activity, anticipated sea-level rise due to global warming may also *have played a role* in the recent high tide levels (Yamano et al. 2007, 408, emphasis added).

Truth claims involving uncertainty about sea level rise have been mobilised in different ways. Tide gauge data, for example, were interpreted in a particular way by the Australian Government, which commissioned installation of a tide gauge on Funafuti's main wharf. Part of a Pacific-wide project, called the South Pacific Sea Level and Climate Monitoring Project, tide gauges were installed in twelve island nation states. A SEAFRAME (Sea Level Fine Resolution Acoustic Measuring Equipment) gauge was installed in Funafuti in March 1993. It records sea level, air and water temperature, atmospheric pressure, wind speed and direction (Anonymous 2004). The ongoing project is implemented by staff at the Australian National Tidal Facility. Uncertainty arising from analysis of the data gathered by these gauges was used to justify a delay in policy-making on Pacific sea level rise by the conservative Australian Government under Prime Minister John Howard. Placing truth in the tide gauge data, other information-gathering devices such as eye-witnessing, photography and memory are challenged and side-lined. Postponed decision-making on the disappearing island was justified by an appeal to the legitimacy of the scientific data analysis:

To be planning in the year 2006 for something that may not happen for 20, 30, 40 years, or may not happen at all [is wrong] when there are so many things that we need to be doing (AAP 2006, np).

A contrasting position was adopted by the then Howard Government's opposition, the Australian Labor Party, which maintained that climate change is an immediate concern (AAP 2006; Albanese 2006). Its environment spokesperson stated:

Climate change is real and it's hurting our Pacific neighbours now. PNG citizens on the Carteret Islands have become the world's first climate change refugees. Tuvalu is expected to be uninhabitable because of rising sea levels over the coming decade. Tuvalu has twice called for help from the Howard Government, and it's twice been rejected. Now we know why. The Government has taken the gamble that things won't get too bad for our Pacific neighbours (Albanese 2006, np).

Truth claims about rising sea levels are also made and contested by Tuvalu's inhabitants. Hilea Vavae, a long-serving Director of the Tuvalu Meteorological Service, penned an unpublished paper on the subject. She pitted an interpretation of tide gauge data that said sea level was falling, against her lived experience:

The main questioned [sic] is: if an arm-chaired scientist says that Tuvalu sea level is falling by nearly 14cm in the last six years or so, do we have to believe it? We all will shrink our faces with great surprise because we are living here and experiencing this everyday (Vavae nd, np).

Vavae is contesting the truth claim of a scientist who interprets tide-gauge data without visiting the islands or using other data sources. Her own

experience of life in Tuvalu, combined with her scientific training, are used to validate her differing truth claim. In contrast, an interview participant contested the exaggeration of sea level rise data:

P8: There was one report I read about Funafuti during the king tides, it is about how 15% of households were flooded. But actually I know myself the actual data of flooded houses here, it's not even 1%. So I really hate that news. Because it will also affect us. If someone reports that there are 15% households under water, so another team comes after, during the same or similar king tide, and they report it's only 2%. So all the people with previous news they say, okay sea level is going down in Tuvalu.

Further conflicting truth claims can be found in debate on appropriate responses to sea level rise. Material fortification such as the building of sea walls and importing soil, for example, was suggested as a possible option by one interview participant.

P9: I always think that practically we should get more soil and lift us up, and be able to stay here. That's one of the best practical ways to remain.

Others however, such as Mark Lynas, dismiss the idea of fortification:

... puddles began to appear around the airstrip. Water had begun welling up through small holes in the ground, as the high tide forced seawater up through the centre of the island. This is why building sea walls around atolls like Tuvalu is pointless - coral rock is porous, so the islands flood from the inside out (Lynas 2004a, np).

Members of the media map objective truth to investigative, eye-witness reporting and contrast their work with that of researchers. For example:

The challenge is to see through the fog of rhetoric and conflicting scientific views to where global climate theory might - or might not - intersect with Tuvalu's people. But that's surprisingly difficult to do. Most experts who have weighed in on the matter haven't visited Tuvalu, and those who have made the journey typically have an agenda of their own ... After I toured Tuvalu, reviewed the scientific evidence and spoke with climate experts and other scientists, I gathered that the nation and its nearly 10,000 people are indeed in trouble and may even be doomed. But rising seas are only part of the problem (Allen 2004, 46).

For Allen, the act of seeing and encountering Tuvalu as a lone, purportedly neutral journalist, provided her with enough evidence to confidently predict Tuvalu's future and also to identify the causes of the country's problems, something 'climate experts' were unable to do. In Allen's account it is the journalist, and not the scientist, who becomes the provider of truth, able to penetrate the complexity of sea level rise issues. Climate science is perceived to be problematically infused with uncertainty and political agendas. Purportedly committed to the agenda of truth, Allen implies a privileged position for journalism over science.

Inhabitants of Tuvalu also make truth claims about climate change impacts by appealing to acts of witness. Enele Sopoaga (former Tuvaluan ambassador to the United Nations) is quoted in one newspaper report as saying that doubters of climate change should visit Tuvalu (Hull 2005, np). Similarly, a suggestion was made by one interview participant (P3) that some of the climate change negotiations should be held in Tuvalu in order for people who make significant international decisions to be directly influenced by perceiving the place, first hand. A community forum participant stated:

F2: I think there is a need for people like Australian journalists to come over to Tuvalu and see for themselves. Because in the recent ... recently some foreign journalists flew into Tuvalu especially to take shots of the high tides, the king tides ... But I think that the issue of sea level rise is complex, in the sense that just by looking at it, it will make people feel scared of the sea level rising up to such a level that they will submerge.

A news report on Radio Tuvalu on 1st March 2006, during the highest tides of the year, stated that 'some families are starting to believe sea level rise because the tides were so high'.

From the accounts described and analysed thus far, it is clear that Tuvalu is a contested space of truth claims straddling past, present and future. Truth claims can be tempered by their makers' ideas, hopes and fears of what they will encounter on Tuvalu. These ideas may influence what type of story is written and what type of footage is captured. One journalist stated, for example, 'let's be honest: I'd come in search of imminent catastrophe' (Levine 2002). In Figures 4 and 5, multiple frames are constructed around the same king tide event: the reader's gaze rests on the (Western) author's gaze of a (Western) media gaze on Tuvalu.

I interviewed another foreign journalist, P7, who visited Tuvalu in late January 2006 and who disclosed some of the motivations that drove the way he carried out his investigative work. I also had the opportunity to observe some of his work. At the time of P7's visit, I had also recently arrived in

Tuvalu for a stay of two and a half months. We had arrived on the same flight, where we had met and informally discussed our respective projects.



Figure 4: Western journalists filming high tides flooding for maximum dramatic effect, Funafuti, February 2006

Source: photograph taken by author



Figure 5: Western journalist filming high tide flooding for maximum dramatic effect, Funafuti, January 2006

Source: photograph taken by author

My interactions with P7 are worth noting in detail, in order to demonstrate the influence purportedly objective journalism can have on the identity of its subjects via mobilisations of islographic imaginative geographies.⁶⁷ P7 was an employee of a broadcasting network based in a Western nation state that had a stated aim of producing 'quality' as opposed to everyday commercial programming. He was working on a story for a weekly current affairs program and was staying on Funafuti for four days. He stated that his journalistic interest in Tuvalu and climate change was centred on how climate change influenced international migration of Tuvaluan people.

We met on the second morning of his stay and I asked him how his work was progressing. He replied that he was pleased, having conducted several interviews and taken some good footage of Funafuti. However, he still wanted to interview on camera an individual who was planning to emigrate from Tuvalu. Knowing from me that I had spoken to many people about climate change issues on a previous visit, he asked if I knew anyone with emigration plans. During many informal conversations and almost thirty semi-structured interviews several months earlier, I had only met two people who expressed a definite desire to build a future outside Tuvalu and explicitly linked this desire to a fear about the impacts of climate change. By the time I returned, they had both left the country. One was a student who was continuing his studies abroad. The other person was not Tuvaluan but had a Tuvaluan spouse. They had left when an employment opportunity had arisen in another country.

⁶⁷ This empirical material was presented in embryonic form in Farbotko (2006a).

There had been a few others, possibly a small minority, who were considering emigrating abroad, or who thought they might decide to emigrate at some point in the future. Only one of these had started the application process for migrating to New Zealand, but her mind was not fully made up. She was also thinking about committing herself to staying in Tuvalu for some time by taking on a new leadership role there.

On the previous day, however, I had met a girl, Mili (a pseudonym), with whom I had become friendly with during my earlier visit. While we were catching up, Mili had asked me if I knew anything about how a Tuvaluan might go about applying for permanent residency in Australia, as she wanted to move there with her husband and their children. The family had spent time in an Australian city in the past for education purposes, and had been very happy there. On returning to Tuvalu, they had experienced tensions within their extended family group, and Mili believed that her nuclear family unit would be stronger if they lived away from the extended family household. I told P7 that I knew one person who was thinking about emigrating, although I specified that the reasons were not, as far as I knew, related to climate change. However, if he was interested in talking to her, I would ask her if she would consider being interviewed on the topic of emigration for a documentary. Mili was hesitant at first but then decided she would participate.

P7 started to set up his camera in Mili's home, ready for the interview. At that stage, Mili changed her mind and opted out. She suggested that Fuli (also a pseudonym), another member of her household, might be willing to be

interviewed. As it turned out, she agreed. I did not know Fuli as she had been abroad during my earlier visit. Fuli had a quietly confident demeanour and seemed not to share Mili's embarrassment at the prospect of being filmed. I noticed that P7 did not question Fuli about her thoughts on emigration before he agreed to the participant swap. Indeed, he started the camera rolling almost immediately, just pausing to explain who he was and why he was in Tuvalu.

His first question to Fuli was 'Why do you want to leave Tuvalu'?

Immediately, Fuli's confidence vanished. She became flustered, giggling nervously and stammered 'I don't know ... because of the sea rising?' P7 tried to get her to relax in front of the camera, chattily asking her to describe her fears concerning climate change and to think about why she wanted to emigrate. Again she stumbled and spoke nervously about an uncertain future in Tuvalu. Eventually when the camera was turned off, Fuli's confident demeanour returned immediately. Clearly relieved that the interview was over, Fuli said emphatically, 'Actually, I don't want to leave Tuvalu. I am just cautious about the future'. As far as I am aware, P7's story never went to air.

As this event demonstrates, representations of identities of people in Tuvalu reflect journalists' perceptions of the expectations of their media-consuming public. For P7, who keenly desired to capture either Mili or Fuli on camera uttering, in his words, three 'short sharp sentences' about Tuvalu, migration and climate change, the motivations and even the intentions of the two women towards emigration were almost irrelevant. By employing a combination of leading questions and careful editing, it appeared that P7 was hoping to dramatise and exaggerate the idea of a forced migration, at the same time

downplaying Fuli's complex feelings towards staying on-island and moving elsewhere. P7 subsequently told me that the Western audience for his program would respond to things that they are fearful of - in this case, tides of immigrants into his Western nation state - so that is how he was advised to frame his story. Also, he informed me that stories needed to be dramatic and newsworthy. His company had spent thousands of dollars sending him to Tuvalu so they wanted something gripping from him to show for it. P7 stated that good news rarely sells. The incident also highlighted my own role in the representation of another's identity. It was partly at my suggestion that the encounter between P7, Mili and Fuli occurred in the first place. My actions are necessarily a part of the islographic processes I am attempting to critique.

The foregoing example of the representation of a Tuvaluan identity in a particular way for the particular purpose of selling news, serves as an illustration of potentially problematic essentialising of Tuvaluans as future migrants or environmental refugees. P7 attempted to distil Fuli's complex feelings about climate change into a crisp story of environmental displacement. The United Nations Environment Program is given credit for introducing the term 'environmental refugee', defined as 'those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardized their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life' (El-Hinnawi 1985, cited in Westing 1992, 203). Three categories were identified. The first was temporary displacement owing to a temporary environmental stress such as an earthquake or industrial accident. The second

was permanent displacement owing to permanent changes in an original site, such as the creation of a lake. The third was a temporary or permanent displacement owing to a reduction in the quality of life, a depletion in the resource base to the point where it no longer meets basic needs. However, despite defining the term, there is no institutionalised policy on environmental refugees in the United Nations and they are not afforded legal recognition under its auspices. Nevertheless, Tuvaluans and other inhabitants of atoll states are being increasingly referred to as potential environmental refugees. McNamara (2006) observes:

an absence of policy for 'environmental refugees' [is based on] unwillingness (or refusal) of United Nations agencies and member states to govern 'environmental refugees'. Connected to this are two key trends: changing attitudes to multilateralism and global environmental issues (McNamara 2006, 245).

McNamara (2006) argues that changing attitudes towards multilateralism are likely to be a consequence of fear and xenophobic domestic policies in the West, generated by images and stories in the popular media and by well-meaning staff in NGOs. Changing attitudes towards global environmental issues, meanwhile, involve:

A move away from state responsibility for transnational environmental pollution ... powerful states [can] relinquish themselves of their environmentally irresponsible actions, the impacts of which are transnational (McNamara 2006, 274).

The 'environmental refugee' category has become prevalent in media and popular discourses, but remains in policy and legal limbo, although such status has not prevented Tuvaluans' identities being essentialised as environmental refugees. A message that arises in journalism is that the New Zealand Government has an immigration policy under which Tuvaluans are accepted there as 'environmental refugees' or 'climate change refugees' (see also Ralston et al. 2004). Yet neither law nor policy at international, Tuvaluan or New Zealand domestic levels identify Tuvaluans, or other dwellers of island states, as present or future environmental refugees. In the following extract from a news article, it is assumed that the New Zealand Government has a humanitarian program specifically for Tuvaluan people:

Unlike New Zealand, which in 2001 began accepting 75 Tuvaluans a year, Australia has so far not acknowledged the prospect of climate refugees (Baker 2007, np).

Similarly, the following extract from an environmental and social justice news service suggests that the New Zealand Government has agreed to unconditionally accept a number of Tuvaluans a year as environmental refugees; in fact, this is not the case.

[Tuvalu] was in the news last year when it announced plans to evacuate its citizens. But Tuvalu's proposal to relocate its citizens was rejected by Australia ... The island nation has now arranged a deal with New Zealand, whereby a number of its citizens would be accepted each year effectively as environmental refugees (Anonymous, 2002,3).

While the New Zealand Government does accept up to 75 Tuvaluan migrants per year, the scheme operates as part of the Pacific Access Category, which is also open under various similar quotas to citizens of Kiribati, Tonga and Fiji. Kiribati comprises entirely atolls, and its population faces similar issues of sea level rise to that of Tuvalu. Among the larger island nation states of Tonga and Fiji, however, populations are rarely represented as future environmental refugees. Moreover, the Pacific Access Category rules stipulate that migrants be aged between 18 and 45 and possess an offer of employment in New Zealand and English language skills. Such requirements mean that migration to New Zealand via the Pacific Access Category is not open to older Tuvaluans, those who do not speak English well, or those who have no skills that are attractive to New Zealand employers. The migration scheme is largely economic, not humanitarian. However, labelling it an environmental refugee program clearly serves the purposes of creating more attention-grabbing news stories and furthering the purposes of environmental organisations concerned with addressing climate change, perhaps suggesting to the public that Tuvaluans have been granted at least some legal protection as environmental refugees when in fact they have none. The following extract suggests that 4000 Tuvaluans have fled climate change impacts by moving to New Zealand - most are likely to have moved for other reasons:

With most Tuvaluans living just one or two metres above sea-level, experts say much of the island chain may be underwater in 50 years, and possibly sooner if a major storm strikes. More than 4,000 people have already left the islands to live in New Zealand (Leahy 2007, np).

Thus far I have demonstrated how representations of Tuvalu, produced by a range of journalist individuals and groups, stake various truth claims about climate change in Tuvalu and its inhabitants. I now turn to my second task in this chapter, which is to analyse in detail islographs of Tuvalu in *Sydney Morning Herald* news reports.

Compassion and voyeurism: *Sydney Morning Herald* islographs⁶⁸

Subjects of compassion

In 2001, an article was published in a major Australian daily newspaper, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, on the changing nature of language. The author claimed that the term 'environmental refugee' had entered into use in English, 'courtesy of the global warming threat to the Pacific island-nation of Tuvalu' (Wajnryb 2001, 10). The threat to which Wajnryb refers is sea level rise related to climate change. News reports concerning the effects of climate change are contributing to Tuvaluan identities being essentialised under this category.

The news media has been invoked as an important arena where representations of low lying islands in the context of climate change are shaped (Connell 2003b; Hay 2000; Mimura et al. 2007). For many readers of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Tuvalu is unknown through direct experience and is created in the imagination through appeals to mediated representations.

⁶⁸ A substantial amount of material in this section is drawn directly, and then developed from, Farbotko (2005a).

In Australia, the *Sydney Morning Herald* is a highly visible and significant arena of public discourse. It is a broadsheet newspaper published daily except Sunday. Sydney is Australia's largest city with a population of 4.2 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003). While the newspaper's geographical epicentre is Sydney, it also has an online version and a distribution in other major cities in Australia. It has a large readership in Australia and mainstream appeal.⁶⁹ Its audience is largely professionals and white collar workers.

In this context, Wajnryb's suggestive, if also flippant, claim that Tuvaluan identity is constituted in terms of environmental displacement suggests that Tuvaluans are essentially suffering victims of climate change in popular Australian imaginings. Connell (2003b) cites dramatic and emotional imagery of Tuvalu's disappearing islands in the news media as a source of problematic views of climate change. He argues that such imagery detracts from paying attention to mitigating the 'actual problems' of storm surges, cyclones and groundwater pollution, and the 'real need both to transform those policies in metropolitan states that contribute to global warming and to develop appropriate environmental management policies within atoll states' (Connell 2003b, 105). Connell's study sought to normatively evaluate representations of Tuvalu against a truth that the author located in the realm of scientific evidence. I argue, however, that an islographic examination of such representations is needed.

⁶⁹ In March 2005 the weekday circulation was 210,600 and on Saturdays circulation was 360,173 according to Audit Bureau of Circulation figures (Herald Adcentre 2007).

When world events are reported, they are often angled with reference to the newspaper's locale. In the case of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, news is likely to be oriented not only to Western, urban and middle class frames of reference, but also to be constructed from a mainland perspective. When Tuvalu became a member of the United Nations in 2000, the *Sydney Morning Herald* described a 'new place' for it 'on the watery margin of the international community' (Riley 2000, 8). Tuvalu was mapped as peripheral to an unspecified centre of importance among nation states. The representation of this margin as 'watery' helped to establish another liminal zone for Tuvalu, in the margin between an imagined present and a time of future climate change disaster, in which Tuvalu experiences 'inevitable submersion due to the greenhouse effect' (Murray 2001, 11). A time is constructed in the near future when Tuvaluans will be forced to 'seek refuge' (Oliver 2001, 15) in the relative safety of the Australian mainland, 'which has pretty much cornered the market when it comes to dry land' in the southern Pacific Ocean (Fitzsimmons 2001, 20).

Australia and Tuvalu are thus represented in a hierarchy of safety. Australia is a secure place, capable of offering a 'lifeline' to 'drowning Tuvalu,' (Wroe 2001, 1) whose low lying atolls are a place of inherent danger. Tuvalu's future looms ominously in imagery of submersion that highlights the physical vulnerability of islands, and conflates climate change with visions of tragic inundation. In the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Tuvalu is 'drowning ... [a] 'tiny nation [that] faces being submerged by rising sea levels' (Wroe 2001, 1) and the rising ocean will 'swamp' its people (Galvin 2001, 8). Such dramatic

imagery establishes climate-change induced sea level rise to be like a tsunami, a powerful force, impossible for the inhabitants of a small strip of land to defend. The sense of danger is embedded in repeated descriptions of Tuvalu as 'tiny' (Stephens 1998, 6; Wroe 2001, 1), an adjective that emphasises vulnerability to ocean (and indeed other) forces. Moreover, Tuvaluans become tragic victims when climate change is represented as 'a matter of life and death' (Korn 1999; Riley 2000, 8). The fact that Tuvalu is 'a mere 4.5 metres above sea level' is a problem that 'no amount of money can solve' (Korn 1999, 7). The Tuvaluan leaders' canniness in negotiating the country's financial affairs seems to be of little assistance in planning for 'global warming' as 'the big unknown' (Bearup 2001, 44). These representations and their perceived newsworthiness render other images of climate change impacts such as drought and saltwater not only significantly less salient: they also cement a bleak vision of Tuvalu's future and the expected welfare of its inhabitants.

The vision of Tuvalu as a tragic place in the context of climate change related sea level rise is also constructed by appealing to stereotypical notions of a tropical island paradise. Royle (2001, 16) claims that 'the island as paradise concept is burnt into the psyche of the Western world at least, while they enjoy their pampered lives, mostly in the safety and security of the continental heartlands.' Similarly, Zurick observes a disjuncture between perceptions of 'paradise' and 'reality'⁷⁰:

⁷⁰ An anecdote is told on Funafuti of a Belgian man who traveled there, went immediately to one of its uninhabited islets in a quest for an island paradise, and was found there a week later by local fishermen, starving and almost dying of thirst (Ells 2004).

The island countries of the South Pacific cover a vast area that for the Western world conveys images of pristine beauty and romantic, timeless isolation. In reality, the South Pacific islands are especially vulnerable to changing economic circumstances and to ecological disturbances. They are experiencing growing populations, acute land shortages, and rising material wants. As a result, adverse environmental conditions constrain many efforts to achieve sustainable forms of development (Zurick 1995, 157).

For some *Sydney Morning Herald* contributors, Tuvalu and other Oceania islands are paradisiacal places (Hill 2001; O' Callaghan 1990; Riley 2000). Appeals are made to mythical and literary notions of an Oceania island paradise, soon to be paradise lost. Hill (2001, 1) uses paradise imagery to evoke support for Tuvalu's 'cause'. Signifying Tuvalu as a 'slice of Pacific paradise' and being 'in imminent peril of becoming a paradise lost to global warming,' Riley (2000, 8) appeals to cherished images of tropical islands as places of both Eden-like abundance and spiritual and moral nourishment away from the wickedness of the world, that have been prominent in Western imaginations at least since the publication of Robinson Crusoe and the Swiss Family Robinson (Loxley 1990). The sense of tragedy is cemented by appealing to the 'imminent' submersion of Tuvalu (Riley 2000, 8). Then, however, and somewhat incongruously in this context, the islands become a spectacle. Tuvalu is constructed as a place for people to visit as a curiosity 'before it is too late' (Bragg 1999, 7).

In the *Sydney Morning Herald*, representations of Tuvalu as a vulnerable place contrast with the constitution of Australia as indomitable and resilient.

Locating severe climate change impacts on low lying islands contributes to a myth that relies on oppositional identity formation in which islands are 'vulnerable' and mainlands are 'secure'. In the *Sydney Morning Herald* texts, statements about climate change were made in such a way as to indicate that the most catastrophic impacts are happening elsewhere, in vulnerable, marginal places, such as Tuvalu. For example, one statement implies a trivialised notion of climate change impacts in Australia, encompassing a slight alteration of weather patterns, while in Tuvalu the impacts are far more tragic: 'climate change doesn't just mean the onset of cloudy weather to Tuvaluans, it is a matter of life and death' (Riley 2000, 8). Climate change is also presented as a problem with immediacy for Tuvalu, and in contrast, a temporally distant concern for people in the West. The Tuvaluans will be 'gone' before they can 'prove to the developed countries the consequences of their actions' (Korn 1999, 7).

An image of Tuvalu as a marginal place threatened with inundation is used for political effect during a commentary on the (then in opposition) Australian Labor Party's welfare policy by one *Sydney Morning Herald* contributor. Morton (2001, 12) highlights his concerns with this policy: 'as for the unemployed, well maybe they can move to Tuvalu'. Morton is apparently drawing on a sense of shame in imaginatively locating the socially marginalised on Tuvalu, which by this time has been discursively entrenched for regular readers of the *Sydney Morning Herald* as a vulnerable place. A material version of this perception is apparent in the proposals put forward by the Australian Government under the Liberal Party to house asylum-seekers in

a detention centre on Tuvalu as part of its 'Pacific solution'. Under that policy, the Australian Government requested its counterparts in Tuvalu to detain refugees from other parts of the world seeking asylum in Australia. The irony involved in such a request (Goldsmith 2002), at a time when the Australian Government would not consider an appeal by the Tuvaluan Government to accept Tuvaluans as a special class of migrants, did not go unnoticed by *Sydney Morning Herald* contributors and readers. A sense of shame in the Australian Government was voiced in letters to the editor and articles (Ettema 2001; Foster 2001; Nguyen 2002; Oliver 2001; Skehan and Clennell 2001).⁷¹

News texts are sites where, in accordance with a journalistic norm of 'balance', multiple voices are heard. But utterances are nevertheless reported selectively (van Dijk 1988). In the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the publication of sensational climate change stories privileges expressions of disempowerment and desperation by Tuvaluan leaders. The texts also contain no perceptions of climate change drawn from the general Tuvaluan populace. The perspectives of ordinary Tuvaluan citizens cannot be obtained from the *Sydney Morning Herald* discourse, which, perhaps unsurprisingly, frames Australian-Tuvaluan interactions primarily as an arena of discussions among senior politicians. For

⁷¹ There is evidence to suggest that earlier approaches by the Tuvalu Government to its counterparts in Australia about migration rights for its citizens were not necessarily related to environmental issues. At a round table meeting of Tuvalu government and donors, it was stated under the agenda item Employment Opportunities, that the Tuvalu Government is 'exploring the potential of establishing a work scheme in Australia similar to the one arranged with New Zealand to take care of the repatriation [of workers from Nauru which would 'increase the pressure on existing social infrastructure and remove a major source of remittances income' (United Nations Development Programme 1991, 3-4). Indeed, a need for employment opportunities in New Zealand and elsewhere in the region was identified in Tuvalu's first post-independence development plan - another UNDP assisted report (Tuvalu Development Plan 1978-1980 1978) and by Knapman et al. (1976).

example, on the 19th July 2001, the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* contained the headline 'Australia refuses to throw lifeline to drowning Tuvalu' (Wroe 2001, 1). The report concerned the negotiation of migration rights for Tuvaluans into Australia, which the Tuvaluan Government had sought from the Australian Government. It was reported that 'the Tuvaluan Government is considering abandoning the islands its people have lived on for thousands of years' (Wroe 2001, 1). Four years earlier, the Tuvalu Statement presented by Toaripi Lauti of Tuvalu's Prime Ministerial Special Envoy On Climate Change, as part of a speech to the UNFCCC - Conference Of Parties 3, contained the following statement:

Mr President, there is nowhere else on earth that can substitute for our God-given homeland in Tuvalu. The option of relocation as mooted by some countries therefore is utterly insensitive and irresponsible (Lauti 1997, np).

Lauti's determinedly empowering speech was not reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, illustrating how news stories concerning Tuvalu can at times represent only a partial account of the ways in which Tuvaluans are grappling with climate change challenges.

Climate change events, and their interpretation, have been represented selectively in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in order to make apparent a sense of inherent newsworthiness (van Dijk 1988). One of the most salient features of the news texts is their silence on adaptation to climate change impacts, with a dismissal of prospects for effective mitigation, and the portrayal of relocation as the only response option for Tuvaluans. Adaptation in particular is viewed

by many researchers, regional policy-makers and by the Tuvaluan Government as an essential component of a threatened community's response to climate change (Barnett 2001; Bettencourt et al. 2006; Campbell and de Wet 2000; Huq et al. 2003; Mimura et al. 2007; National Summit on Sustainable Development 2004). Yet in the *Sydney Morning Herald* discourse there is little capacity for discussion of possible adaptation measures in Tuvalu because of the direct causal linkages that are constructed between climate change, long term sea level rise and abandonment of islands. The dramatic vision of a nation 'being submerged by rising sea levels' (Wroe 2001, 1) is employed in such a way that for Tuvaluans, approaching 'Australia and New Zealand about resettlement' is represented as the only possible response to climate change as 'their homeland slowly disappears beneath their feet' (Wroe 2001, 1).

The *Sydney Morning Herald* texts can be read as a binary conflict between Australian leaders and those of the Oceania island states in the context of climate change. This narrative technique angles news towards local, Australian perspectives, and is a characteristic journalistic device for engaging readership (Parisi and Holcomb 1994). How Tuvaluan leaders voice their concerns in this dialogue is instrumental in representing the Tuvaluans as victims, and Australian leaders as their powerful counterparts. Tuvaluan leaders are represented as feeling a sense of hopelessness against the impacts of climate change and sadness at the lack of help they receive from other countries. Their voices are heard in the news texts pleading with the Australian Government to assist them by committing to the reduction of

greenhouse gases and by granting their people migration rights (Wroe 2001). A former Prime Minister, Bikenibeu Paeniu, was twice quoted as saying 'we are the most vulnerable of the most vulnerable of countries to the effect of sea-level rise' (Korn 1999, 7; Riley 2000, 8). Another former Prime Minister, Koloa Talake, remarks 'What will happen to all of my 12,000 people?' (Skehan 2002, 2). In these utterances Tuvaluans are constituted as victims, at the mercy of the Australian Government and its unsympathetic climate change and border-protection policies. The Tuvaluans are not, intriguingly, represented as victims of the practices and environmental effects of mass-consumption society. In the representation of the conflict over climate change between Australian and Oceania island leaders, the *Sydney Morning Herald* displays functional conservatism, limiting critique to the realms of government policy without questioning the social practices of production and consumption that also contribute to the climate change problem (Parisi and Holcomb 1994).

As illustrated by the quotations from ministerial sources noted above, Tuvaluans are implicated in the representation of their identity as climate change victims. Tuvaluan leaders are associated with a group of Oceania island representatives who lobbied the Bush administration in the United States against a climate change 'modern holocaust' (Skehan and Clennell 2001, 10). Identification with refugees is linked to the horrors of genocide. Working within the confines of a Western hegemony that has long perceived their island way of life as economically marginal (Hau'ofa 1993), the leaders of Tuvalu draw on a sense of tragedy and stereotypes of island vulnerability to

highlight their climate change concerns 'as a matter of life and death,' (Korn 1999, 7; Riley 2000). Islander identity is constructed in opposition to 'wealthier' (Murray 2001, 11) and 'developed' countries (Korn 1999, 7). The use of dramatic imagery, and the highlighting of a moral battle between islands and the West by Tuvaluan leaders is compatible with a journalistic emphasis on sensational events that are perceived as newsworthy. In contrast, domestic political events in Tuvalu (such as a vote of no-confidence against then Prime Minister Sopoanga in 2004, or a rare protest that was staged against then Finance Minister Bikenibeu Paeniu for alleged misuse of Taiwanese aid money for the private sector in 2006) have not been reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Tuvaluan identity in the *Sydney Morning Herald* is constituted not on its own terms but in opposition to perceptions of Australia as a place of safety where environmental refugees could possibly shelter. The reception of political refugees and other immigrants in Australia has been a prominent political issue in recent years and has received a great deal of coverage in the Australian news media. The so-called Tampa incident, the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, and the 'children overboard' event in 2001, were events that prompted passionate debate on the reception of immigrants into Australia (Klocker and Dunn 2003; Slattery 2003). Saxton (2003) showed that the *Sydney Morning Herald* drew on nationalist discourses that constructed refugees as undesirable in the physical and imagined national space, contributing to a sanitised racism that facilitated oppressive power relations between the dominant group and racial minorities. The ethnic

designation 'Tuvaluan' in the *Sydney Morning Herald* seems to be becoming synonymous with environmental refugees:

Australia would join a co-ordinated international response to any environmental disaster. But Tuvaluans could not get special treatment as environmental refugees and would have to apply under the migration program like anyone else (Wroc 2001).

Thus it is through an identity of environmental refugees that Tuvaluans are becoming essentially perceived in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Such a perception seems to create a valid context for, and be supported by, Wajnryb's (2001, 10) claim that the term 'environmental refugee' was coined in response to Tuvalu's plight. This discourse, being in one sense evocative of compassion for Tuvaluans as victims, subsided and in more recent *Sydney Morning Herald* discourse another identity for Tuvaluans has been introduced.

*Objects of voyeurism*⁷²

After publishing my analysis of *Sydney Morning Herald* discourse on Tuvalu (Farbotko 2005a), related in the previous section, I continued to monitor articles in that newspaper and observed a significant new way in which Tuvalu began to be represented. In 2006, travel writers started to harness a voyeuristic appeal in Tuvalu's sinking islands to Australian audiences. Tuvalu has become a space in which two travel writers in this newspaper have located a new practice called climate change tourism.

⁷² Substantial material in this section is drawn from Farbotko (2007b).

In May 2006, the travel section of the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a feature story on Tuvalu titled *That Sinking Feeling*. The author wrote, 'in a large world, Tuvalu is beautifully small ... it warmed my heart immeasurably. See it for yourself, and soon. The islands may not be around forever' (Balmain 2006, 6). A few weeks later, the *Sydney Morning Herald* ran a story titled 'The hottest spots on the planet' (Iaccarino 2006, 18-19). Listing ten destinations that were worth visiting 'before the seas rise, glaciers melt and water supplies dry up', the article was suggesting nothing less than climate change tourism: 'the global warming clock is ticking so see these places while you can.' On the list, with the Great Barrier Reef, the Alps and the Maldives was 'the island paradise of Tuvalu.' Along with Tuvalu's 'relaxed Pacific vibe' and 'big-smiling locals', travellers were informed that they could view first hand 'an amazing spectacle: one of the world's smallest countries disappearing beneath the Pacific Ocean.' The article promised the excitement of landing planes on a runway partially underwater and locals becoming accustomed to undertaking business in knee-deep waters. Such representations are designed to foster in travellers a desire to visit Tuvalu or at the very least, to foster fascination in it from afar. Tuvalu is being imagined as a site of frontier travel, packaged up in an apparently appealing combination of an extraordinarily friendly local population and disappearing islands.

A newspaper article on a tourist destination, unlike a tourism brochure, is not published solely for the purpose of increasing the number of tourist dollars spent there. Such articles are largely there to fill in space between travel advertisements. But they are also intended to contain useful travel information

and to be entertaining, for planning a real holiday or perhaps just for taking an imaginative one while reading. Such articles are, in general, likely to be influenced by public relations teams for particular tourist authorities or companies. However, there is no evidence that the tiny tourism industry in Tuvalu had any input into the particular articles that I am examining. The very small tourism industry that does exist in Tuvalu markets itself as a welcoming untouched frontier, but not as a site of environmental disaster (Tourism Council of the South Pacific 1997). An example of Tuvalu's tourism marketing, published in a glossy brochure that I obtained from the Consulate of Tuvalu in Sydney, Australia mobilises ideas of Tuvalu as 'unknown' and 'small' as I discussed in Chapter Three as follows:

In an ocean that's been described as the last untapped frontier in the world, a rare and tiny gem has been discovered. With a land area of only 26 square kilometres and a population of 9,000 spread over nine coral-ringed atolls, Tuvalu (pronounced "Too-var-lu") is a place most people have probably never heard of, let alone thought about, as a holiday destination. Which is what makes this, one of the world's smallest and most isolated sovereign nations, so appealing (Ministry of Finance nd-a, np).

Another brochure, acquired similarly:

There are no mountains, waterfalls or natural streams, but there are a number of features that are of interest to visitors. In fact, the very lack of such features, along with the smallness of the land area, is an attraction in its own right. The vastness and the special features of the ocean, interspersed with atolls, magnificent lagoons and small islands, all provide a unique ambience that makes the country exceptionally attractive. The remoteness and relative isolation of Tuvalu appeals to many. The

islands of Tuvalu are very small and separated by significant distances of nothing but water. With the maximum of 4 metres above sea level, the islands provide the classic image with blue sea and sky, white breakers along the fringing reefs, sand and swaying palms. Within the lagoons, the contrast between the colours of deep and shallow water, the beach and the vegetation is especially dramatic (Ministry of Finance nd-b, np).

The editorial decision that was made to publish the *Sydney Morning Herald* articles on Tuvalu as a climate change tourism destination harnessed intense public interest in climate change issues that had emerged in Australia by 2006, influenced at least in part by the success of Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. Perhaps aimed at well-travelled readers who feel like they have 'seen it all' and are keen for fresh frontiers, climate change tourism could also be just as appealing to 'arm-chair travellers'.

What, then, might be achieved for Tuvaluans by putting a spotlight on the image of Tuvalu as a hotspot for climate change tourism? Apart from possible financial benefits from tourist spending, it may be argued that such tourism could contribute to the extension of an ethic of care to Tuvaluans as those most afflicted by sea level rise, particularly among those in the post-industrial world where contributions to climate change impacts are greatest *per capita*. Or is it more likely that Tuvalu will merely be consumed voyeuristically - as an object of titillation - as a commodity for the wealthy traveller? Tourists do not actually need to visit Tuvalu for its image as a climate change destination to be produced and consumed voyeuristically. While the tourism industry exploits images of particular places for financial gain, the images the tourist

industry propagates are not necessarily passively and uncritically absorbed by an unwitting consumer public. Nevertheless, when a particular site is represented as a tourist destination, the purpose is to create intrigue and excitement. It is essential that place representations foster a desire in potential tourists to experience something interesting or novel first hand. The Oceania island imagined as paradise, now so standard a symbol of holiday relaxation and indulgence, is being re-imagined in the case of Tuvalu. With liberal use of exaggeration and dramatisation, and appeals to Western myths of Atlantis and dreams of lost utopias, Tuvalu is being repackaged as a sinking paradise, an island disaster ready for consumption.

In neither article I have cited were ethical questions raised about whether tourists may contribute to addressing the problem of the 'disappearing islands' or to entrenching it. Many Tuvaluans I spoke to informally stated that 'witnessing' climate change impacts will contribute to an extension of an ethic of care among foreigners who visit. They expect and welcome curiosity, and project a friendly image to such ends. They know that foreigners visiting their country will know a lot less about it than their hosts are likely to know about theirs, and state an expected almost unconditional compassion in response to their climate change vulnerability. But consider, for instance, possible modes of transport used by a hypothetical tourist to arrive in Tuvalu. Although available at a fraction of the financial and environmental cost, neither article mentions the possibility of boat travel to Tuvalu on an existing service from Fiji. Information on air travel – the assumed mode of transport - however, is provided, a mode of transport that contributes significantly to greenhouse gas

emissions. Should hypothetical tourists consider cost-benefit accounting of their tourist dollars spent against environmental pollution? Or should they be encouraged to avoid considering any such ethical dilemma? It is interesting to contrast the risks to different parties involved in the act of climate change tourism. While risk from island to traveller are mentioned in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, there is no mention of reciprocal risk from traveller to island. There is silence on the small but symbolically important climate change risk to Tuvalu's inhabitants posed by the act of air travel. However, in the *Sydney Morning Herald* there is an explicit documentation of risks that would-be tourists to Tuvalu are likely to face. These include health risks, unreliable transport links and a lack of television (Balmain 2006). Tuvaluans, moreover, are represented as smiling and happy even as the seas rise around them. The tourist seems to be encouraged to take advantage of their simple joyousness for their own holiday enjoyment. Tuvaluan identities are distilled into a convenient childlike simplicity - indeed, the photos accompanying the articles are of happy children, very similar to those in Tuvalu's tourism marketing brochures. Such a representation can assist the hypothetical tourist in feeling little ethical involvement in the sinking islands, even while witnessing them first hand and contributing to their fate.

The most recent data indicate that only 178 tourists visited Tuvalu in 2005, out of a total of 1085 non-resident arrivals (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2004). Climate change tourism is not yet a feature of life there, if journalists who visit each year to try and secure the climate change scoop are excluded. However, there may be the start of a climate change tourism boom.

Small groups of eco-tourists are being brought in by Japanese non-government organisation Tuvalu Overview. There has also been publication of a glossy book of photographs and popular ethnography by travel publishing giant Lonely Planet. It is written by the company's co-founder, Tony Wheeler, who claims to 'explore this endangered land and celebrate an enduring culture' (Bennetts and Wheeler 2001, dust jacket). The book was inspired by photographer Peter Bennetts' desire to 'capture the essence of life in a country that faces inundation as sea levels rise' (Bennetts and Wheeler 2001, np).

Although Tuvalu may not yet be attracting many tourists, it is being represented in the mainstream Australian news media as an appealing site where the impacts of climate change can be witnessed first hand. Such representations may provide opportunities for reflection on how indifference, shame, and compassion among tourists and media-consumers can variously operate as barriers and opportunities to extending an ethic of care towards those most afflicted by climate change. Tourism to sites of tragedy and devastation elsewhere, in the practice of what has been called 'dark tourism', is being reflected on critically in public discourse in Australia. The *Sydney Sunday Telegraph*, another mainstream newspaper, for example, has questioned the ethics of 'Trading on Tragedy' (David 2006) in its 'infotainment' magazine insert *Sunday Magazine*. Similarly, in the *Melbourne Age's Good Weekend* supplement (the *Sydney Morning Herald's* sister publication) it was stated:

Why are we drawn to these places [of tragedy]? If you believe we're pure of heart, the answer is education or enlightenment. In theory, visiting such sites can serve as a

reminder of the horrors humanity is capable of, and raise a few moral questions worth pondering. If you think we're less than fully evolved, you'll note an unsavoury element here. Dark tourism allows us to have a raw and adrenaline-fuelled response to something shocking, be it the reality of evil or the reminder of our mortality (Alexander 2007, 17).

That these debates are occurring makes their absence in the two articles on climate change tourism and Tuvalu in the *Sydney Morning Herald* cited above especially problematic. Does it say something about climate change as problem split down a Western/non-Western or postindustrial/non-industrial divide, rather than a lesson for humanity, as dark tourism to places like Auschwitz is pitched? Tourism seems to be becoming a problematic way of organising imaginings of climate change in Tuvalu. The possible future devastation of the Tuvalu islands, and Tuvaluans themselves, are being represented as consumables for the pleasure of the wealthy. Such representations help to morally distance those who can most afford to pay for environmental protection from the effects of their polluting activities at the same time that they are, paradoxically, brought in close physical proximity to them in and through tourism practices. Indeed, a desire for the islands to actually sink seems to underwrite the more extreme voyeurism that Tuvalu as a site of frontier travel provides. There is novelty in having once witnessed something unique that no longer exists. Although witnessing environmental damage might be conducive of behavioural change and advancing understanding of the life worlds of other people, and might thus be useful in extending an ethic of care to them, this is not always the case. Curiosity can disguise a more problematic tendency to voyeurism when it comes to a distant

set of islands. Tourism can be an act of witnessing that is performed in a partial and selective manner that maintains distance between the viewer and the viewed. A tourism 'package' of friendly people and disappearing islands does not necessarily equate with the practice of compassion.

Literature on dark tourism tends to assume that visits are to sites where tragic events occurred in the past (Lennon and Foley 2000; Strange and Kempa 2003), and as such can have positive impacts on memory and education. But dark tourism is also about sites of current or immediately past disaster. While Auschwitz is merging from living memory into 'the past', bus tours operate through working class areas of New Orleans devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, where locals are still undergoing the harrowing process of rebuilding their homes and their lives. In contrast, climate change tourism in Tuvalu is not just about seeing the place before or after it sinks, it is about seeing the place *as* it sinks. This situation places the tourist in the position of being a direct observer to a tragic event, the ethical implications of which are surely different than for those sites where interpretations of past events become tourist attractions.

Tuvalu is not Samoa, Tahiti, Fiji or Hawaii, and it does not have an established tourist industry. It is therefore a vacant site for climate change frontier travel to be imagined. Represented as a spectacle, Tuvalu is being produced as a site of voyeurism. Witnessing, via the media, the smallest, most remote or rarest places is a process of differentiation that is voyeuristic and contributes to the identification of more familiar space as safe and normal.

Produced mostly for cosmopolitan consumers, journalist representations frame Tuvalu and its inhabitants as a spectacle to be viewed and/or enjoyed even as the threat of inundation may also evoke compassion. The intrigue of Tuvalu to the voyeur lies at least partly in its island isolation - a unique, far-away world - to date substantially 'untouched' by tourism and soon to be lost. The intrigue is reliant on the possibility (at times perhaps the voyeuristic hope) that one day in the future the Tuvalu islands will, in fact, no longer exist. Thus, in journalist islographs of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Tuvalu's inhabitants are subjects of tragedy and/or compassion as environmental refugees, and objects of voyeurism as 'disappearing islanders'. Taken together images of Tuvalu as valuable yet expendable have emerged in *Sydney Morning Herald* news reports where, as the islands disappear, Westerners are urged to turn a voyeuristic eye towards the islands as paradoxical sites of tragedy and entertainment.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that in the journalist islographs surveyed for this research Tuvalu's inhabitants are simultaneously identified as subjects of compassion and objects of voyeurism. Such a paradox is embodied in recurring images of Tuvalu as valuable yet expendable space of climate change. I have shown how in the identity of the inhabitants of Tuvalu, its islands have come to embody a paradoxical space - on one hand, a showcase where compassion is needed and deserved and on another, a sacrificial lamb, the slaughter of which serves voyeuristic pleasures. In the next chapter, I

demonstrate how among Tuvalu's inhabitants, such islographs are being negotiated and attempts are being made to reclaim Tuvalu as inherently valuable space.

Chapter 6: Inhabitant islographs

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how environmentalist and journalist islographs of Tuvalu have been negotiated by its inhabitants, addressing the sixth objective of this work. I ask what islographic forms are being articulated in response to representations of Tuvalu as, at times, a global litmus test, a sustainability showcase and an expendable space, in the climate change context. I draw on the 31 semi-structured interviews I carried out with people having an existing engagement in Tuvalu's climate change discourses.

In the previous two chapters I argued that Tuvalu's islographs are structured by a paradox; its island space is constituted as separate from and yet embedded in global climate change trajectories as Westerners locate their climate change fears and desires in the Tuvalu islands; and its inhabitants are simultaneously identified as subjects of compassion and objects of voyeurism. In this chapter, I demonstrate that among Tuvalu's educated elite - politicians, bureaucrats, students, community elders, and pastors - there is resistance to such islographs. I show that attempts are being made to reclaim Tuvalu as inherently valuable space. I argue that interview participants link Tuvalu to the rest of Earth not as its 'climate change canary', but connected to and embedded in a set of common rights and responsibilities attributed to humanity as a whole in addressing climate change. A mobilisation of an island paradox among Tuvaluan citizens simultaneously emphasises the strength and

uniqueness of Tuvaluan culture and the rights and responsibilities common to all inhabitants of Earth.

Islographs in Tuvalu

The coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol on 16th February 2005 was officially marked in Tuvalu by a ceremony in which eight coconut trees, symbolising Tuvalu's eight *fenua* (island communities) were planted in a prominent public position in front of the government building. Then Prime Minister Maatia Toafa stated that the day was a 'momentous occasion ... because what we have always fought for over the years, is now finally a reality' (TANGO 2005, 1). In further acknowledging that 'climate change is a very serious issue for Tuvalu', the Prime Minister went on to highlight climate change as simultaneously a global and local issue, the paradox of island space operating via an inversion of the environmentalist trope 'act local think global'. It would be necessary to act globally, in order to protect the local. He stated that it would be necessary for the Tuvaluan nation to 'work collectively with other nations to find innovative solutions that are politically attractive, environmentally friendly and market driven, to mitigate against the effects of climate change and to change the world for a better future, for the sake of our children' (TANGO 2005, 1). His islograph of climate change, mobilised in the formal discourse of a government ceremony, emphasises Tuvalu's embeddedness in a problem of global reach. Such rhetoric reinforces Tuvalu as paradoxical space: the canary in the coalmine of environmentalist islographs described in Chapter Four. This role for Tuvalu, as a litmus test for wider climate change concerns, is also clear in the words Enele Sopoaga,

former Tuvalu ambassador to the United Nations and Vice-Chairman of AOSIS:

Tuvalu and SIDS may be the first to suffer the impacts of climate change. But the consequences of not doing something urgently will be felt by all - for climate change the world is all 'Tuvalu' (Sopoaga 2006, 1).

One interview participant stated a similar position:

P11: If Tuvalu goes down it goes down for something. At least the voice is heard. Therefore this is not a concern for Tuvaluans only. It should be a global concern ... There was a guy from Bangladesh I read in the internet and it is titled "Tuvalu today, us tomorrow". Because if Tuvalu goes down today in vain, then definitely other low-lying countries will go down as well.

Given the foregoing examples, islographs representing Tuvalu as a global litmus test in the climate change context are reinforced to some extent among Tuvaluan citizens and official discourse. However, there are also important divergences from such representations that need to be documented and examined. During interviews, I asked participants to explain their perceptions of how non-inhabitants view Tuvalu. Responses revealed a variety and complexity of divergences from the themes I identified in environmentalist and journalist islographs.

Several Tuvaluans stated that their islands and people are simply unknown to many who do not live there or in the Oceania region:

P12: I've been to some places where people don't actually know where Tuvalu is. They don't know anything about Tuvalu. The first question they ask is 'where are you from?' - 'from Tuvalu' 'where is Tuvalu? Is it a country on its own? How do you get there? Where is it? What is the main source of income over there? How many people are there in the country?' ... I do travel a lot and even outside Fiji, Australia, I've been to Australia and it's pretty difficult for some people to relate to where I came from. They might know Fiji but not Tuvalu. Even in Fiji I have met people who say, where is Tuvalu? You know, just imagine it is our next door neighbour and there are people there who don't even know where Tuvalu is.

P14: To me, people will say where is Tuvalu? They will not know where Tuvalu is on the map. I've been to some places like Japan and some guys we met from bigger countries they will just ask, "Who are you and where are you from?" "I'm from Tuvalu" and they will say "Where is it on the map, can you show me?" That's the first question they will ask and "What are people like?" and "What is their life?"

P17: Well I think that they usually do not see Tuvalu as a nation, you know. The reason why I mention this is because every time you go overseas they ask you the first question 'Where are you from? Tuvalu? Oh where is Tuvalu on the map?' They don't even know where Tuvalu is on the map. Because it is a tiny, very small and isolated, remote, so this is the perception by the people outside Tuvalu.

Other participants, however, perceived that outsiders see Tuvalu in terms of climate change:

P19: For those people who do not know about Tuvalu at all, and when they read about Tuvalu they are sort of frightened you know. They are afraid to come and see Tuvalu because its small and especially climate change. And they are worried, some are very worried. They can't believe how we survive on the island.

For one participant, perceptions among non-inhabitants of Tuvalu as a space of climate change do not accord with everyday life on the islands. For this participant, non-inhabitants perceive Tuvalu in terms of climate change, but inhabitants do not:

P10: They [non-inhabitants] see [Tuvalu] in terms of climate change. [But people here] are just enjoying life here in Tuvalu. They are not worrying about climate change and sea level rise. Now they don't believe in it.

Another participant perceived Tuvaluan culture and climate change to be complex, intertwined issues, understanding of which cannot be gained from superficial observation by visitors:

P11: I would say that they [visitors] would see Tuvalu on the surface, and they would analyse and picture Tuvalu from the surface only. Because it takes years for a foreigner to fully understand the way of life and the culture of these people ... I have also read comments of those who came here trying to prove the reality of sea level rise and its impacts on the people and their lives. And they come here, they would walk around for two or three weeks, and they would go back and write reports saying that Tuvalu is fine. Sea level rise doesn't have any impact on the lives of the people. The problem is that they don't fully understand the relationship of the people, their culture, and the environment.

These participants perceive their islands to be either unknown or essentialised by non-inhabitants in their understandings of Tuvalu as 'disappearing islands of climate change'. Contrastingly, the Luaseuta Foundation, an organisation in Tuvalu, contributes to representations of Tuvalu as being in imminent danger:

the tiny nation of Tuvalu which is comprised of 9 islands is slowly being ravaged by the effects of Global Warming. Tuvalu has already lost 1 meter of land around the largest island due to rising ocean levels. These islands have been basically forgotten about by the rest of the world until recent years. Add poverty and limited resources to the mix and Tuvalu is in dire need of help. Tuvalu is a totally aid dependent country and is in a state of crisis. The Luaseuta Foundation has been set up to help Tuvalu survive (The Luaseuta Foundation 2005, np).

The organisation, which requests donations from non-inhabitants via a website, has questionable credibility. Claims are made on its website that it is a member of TANGO (The Luaseuta Foundation 2005). It purports to be a legitimate non-government organisation, but according to TANGO staff this is not the case.

The islands are represented in many more different ways among Tuvalu's inhabitants. Firstly, it is important to note that the 'disappearing island' is in some ways marginal in everyday life in Tuvalu. It is often a distant concern for people who are also grappling with more immediate issues such as employment, health, and church, community and family obligations, as one participant explained:

P20: For ordinary Tuvaluans, [climate change is] something that's not in the forefront of their minds. I think daily lives have many many other things that are at the forefront of their minds. I think more direct is that it's a very very poor country. People are worried about food on the table - even though people are not hungry here, but they are worried about drinking water, health, looking after their kids, sort of run

of the mill activities that everyone in the world worries about, like getting their kids off to school.

Secondly, islographs of Tuvalu in the context of climate change vary significantly among the population and are influenced by a range of factors including religious belief, uncertainty, personal observations and experience, emotions and senses of identity.

For example, climate change is intertwined in various ways with religious beliefs held by many inhabitants. The EKT, the national church in Tuvalu, has adopted a position in congruence with many religious organisations around the world, acknowledging the potential significance of climate change and a role for the church in reducing its negative impacts (eg. World Council of Churches 2004). An EKT pastor's presentation at the WWF workshop I attended demonstrated the Church's stance, that 'God gave us a perfect world' and it is the duty and responsibility of his people to be 'responsible stewards' since God 'entrusted its care to us'. Pitching economic gain directly against environmental loss, the pastor stated that 'our personal blindness and political passivity contributes to the global catastrophe'. Moreover, 'the root cause of our crisis is human greed', and 'greed has no respect for the living environment'. The Church should 'hold hand in hand with local and international environmental groups and governments'. Reverend Tafue Lusama, a Tuvaluan pastor, writes of the EKT's position on climate change, stating that his church sees climate change as a theological issue:

The land is being eaten away by the sea, more and more storms and cyclones visit the small island nation of Tuvalu. Plants and crops no longer grow in the infertile land. Numerous diseases [have] sprung up. People start to see that there is a serious problem coming their way. Their country is starting to be submerged under water ... The church, as the agent of God's mission, should therefore stand with the poor and the marginalized, fighting for justice and equality for humans as well as for nature as a whole (Lusama 2005, 5-6).

Despite recognition and a call to action in the discourse of the EKT's leaders, there remains theological uncertainty and in some instances, conflict, in relation to the climate change issue for many people in Tuvalu:

The minds of the people wonders why all these changes are taking place. Is it a punishment from God? What happened to the covenant God made with Noah, in which the rainbow stood as a symbol? If it is a punishment, why are we being punished? And if it is not a punishment from God, then who is responsible? (Lusama 2005, 5-6).

In the biblical story of Noah's Ark, God flooded the entire world, causing much destruction. However, Noah, his family and the world's creatures were saved because Noah built an ark for them that withstood the massive flood. Afterwards, God made a promise to Noah that never again would such a flood occur. Thus, for some of those who witness changing climatic patterns, it is a question of Christian faith that there cannot be a destruction of land by encroachment of water. I noted in Chapter One that two members of the Tuvaluan population declined to be interviewed because doing so would conflict with their beliefs that God would protect them from future harm. One

interview participant working with climate change issues in Tuvalu

acknowledged such a perception among the population in the following terms:

P11: Most of the people that I talk to concerning climate change do not believe that climate change exists. Even though ... they do acknowledge that climate patterns have changed in Tuvalu, the problem is that because Tuvaluans are Christians, and they believe the literal meaning of the story of Noah.

A Uniting Church Minister, formerly of Tuvalu but now an Australian citizen, has spoken of some Tuvaluan ministers on the islands as ‘hang[ing] on to their old belief that there will be no more flood’ (Ioane 2004, np). According to some interview participants, climate change presents a theological conflict only to certain sectors of the population, such as the elderly or those with little education:

P19: Most of the people are worried [about climate change]. Only a few people, some of the very old people, if you approach it they say because they are Christian and they read the bible. Because of Noah there is no more “high tide”. We are trying to tell them that climate change is real.

P24: You should know that Tuvaluan people are very religious. So they don’t have that problem in mind - because they think that what they believe from their ancestors and in the bible. They don’t care that much about new problems like climate change, like new invented, things. The other thing, because, the problem here is that most Tuvaluan people are not that educated ... It is only the new generation that have that in mind because they attend school.

Furthermore, theological conflict with climate change is linked to other issues beyond Noah's Ark. For the following participant, predicting the future was a complex balancing act between scientific projections and respecting God's will:

P16: If Tuvalu is going to be here, well maybe/maybe not. But as a believer, can I bring that in? I know things are going to change but they are in God's hand. God is in control. God knows. But I really believe that if sea level is really going to affect, then Tuvalu might be first to go down because it is very small and not high above sea level. So if sea is rising the next 45 to 50 years then Tuvalu might be under water.

Similarly, according to another participant, who was not a member of the EKT church but one of the smaller Christian churches, conflict arose from a theologically prohibited act of aspiring to be God-like:

P1: I don't really know what's going to happen. We will leave it with the Creator, because he knows. Of course, the point of view of the scientists will be different ... because they are studying it ... [its] different for me as an ordinary person. People will say that 'sea level will rise, sea level will come up, Tuvalu will come down' ... well we all have our point of view. Let me give you an example: why should you predict something when it wasn't you who created it? You can predict what you need. If a person who creates a car, for example, they will know when the car will expire ... But predicting something you didn't create - it's like, to us Christians, you are trying to be like God, you know.

Another participant, a community leader, speaking not of his own faith but that of others, indicated that climate change-related projects faced barriers to achieving their aims because of theological conflict:

P8: The important thing in Tuvalu about the climate change issue - it's really a challenge for us. Tuvalu is composed of 98% Christian denominations. Trying to explain to stakeholders about the climate change issue, it really disturbs their religious belief. So when I started on climate change I really had a hard time talking to people. They don't like me.

EKT pastors are being included on project teams in an effort to remove religious barriers to implementing projects related to climate change. For instance, pastors formed part of a National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) team, a step that was seen by team members as useful in reducing theological conflict. The NAPA report stated:

Linked to ... lack of understanding on the climate change issue is the misunderstanding by the stakeholders of the biblical theology of God's promise to Noah. Even though, stakeholders' could note changes in the landscape and their surrounding environment, on the contrary, they could not link these changes to Climate Change due to their deep-rooted religious belief and misconception of the Noah and the Flood bible story about God's promise (Noa et al. nd, np).

One participant, involved in a climate change project auspiced by the EKT, explained the church's attempt to reconcile the existence of climate change with God's promise to Noah that there would never be another flood:

P16: The old people they kept on saying it cannot be like that because God has promised Noah that such things will never happen again, like the flood. But we have to see both sides. If God promised that to Noah, that he would not do that. But it's not God sending this, it's the people who are doing what they should not do or doing what they want and causing damage to the environment ... So we are telling the

people, of course we have faith in God, and we believe that God can save us from this tragedy, but you know God gave us also the ability to do something.

However, for others among Tuvalu's Christian believers, theological conflict is reconciled by an apparent *lack* of climate change damage:

P10: The people believe in God so it stops people thinking about climate change. Some people listen only to religious doctrine and not to the government. Because the people see that Tuvalu is not sinking, and that other natural disasters are not happening, they do not believe in climate change. They see hurricanes and strong winds striking neighbouring countries but not coming to Tuvalu. If a hurricane strikes, the people think it is God's doing. Once something happens, they might think that climate change is happening.

Nevertheless, there are also those who are concerned about significant climate change damage such as flooding, erosion, and ground water salinity, and do not relate their perceptions to theological doctrine:

P9: We have experienced more frequent high tides ... This is August right and there is quite a tremendous flooding occurred. If you passed by the road quite close to the Matagali Bar, those roads were flooded. Maybe there will be a little bit more later tonight. But it has taken place since Saturday. So before, like in 1990s when I started working here we got flooded only in February and January, but not any more. We get flooded Jan Feb March April May. And I mean this is August. So we got flooded in August. For sure in past years we have [mainly] been flooded in October, November, December.

P17: Our coast, you know the erosion, we are experiencing that. For our cultivation, you know the agricultural activities, which is mainly subsistence based agricultural

activities, we dig big holes, you know, dug out pits, you have seen them around Funafuti. And we have now noticed that the salinity of the ground water has increased. So we believe that this is an effect of sea level rise. And also climate, you know the weather pattern has changed a lot. Like flooding, we only know from previous years that flooding is only in the month of February, when it is spring tide, but now it is almost every quarter of the year, or even six times a year we notice that.

However, uncertainty is also attached to the causes of observed changes. For example, the following reflection on inundation introduces the possibility of local, on-island development contributing to flooding:

P12: We have ... places being inundated by the sea, and according to [some] people, these places have never been inundated before. But now they are flooding, with seawater. They have coconut plantations and everything on it ... I do understand that some of our islands geologically, maybe some of them are sand cays - that are subject to change anyway, from sea-currents. But talking about places being inundated with water. In Funafuti itself, we do have king tides in February - covering areas that were not covered before. But I cannot really tell you what is causing this. It could be because of developments, and other things around them.

For one participant, a reflection on mysteries of 'nature' echoes the mysteries of God's hand in observed changes noted earlier. Climate change is perceived as a negative force pitted against the more benign forces of 'nature':

P5: There might be some changes in weather patterns, maybe there might be some changes in the geographic area of Tuvalu. Maybe some islands will be disappearing, maybe some will be growing. What I have seen so far since I was a child, there used to be an islet at the far end of Funafuti. Today it's all sand. But before there were a lot of trees. Pandanus trees, coconut trees, shrubs. Not a very big island. But just

recently it's no longer there, it's gone. But what also amazes me is that there are some parts of the island that there's new sand, and new trees growing there. So it looks like how nature works is unexpected. To me imagining it in about fifteen year's time, probably there will be some more islets growing, or being eroded away, and new places. It's an unusual phenomenon. We need to be aware that nature works in strange ways. I've seen on [my home island], where I come from, some parts of the island are being eaten up, really big areas of land gone, disappeared. But there was this other part of the island that has grown more than 20m. Also what I noticed [there] is that, when I was a child, the lagoon used to be really deep. Now, I can really see sand and rocks in the lagoon ... It makes me wonder about all these concepts of sea level rise and global warming, maybe it's true that sea level rise is happening but maybe nature has a way of working around things, maybe there's a balance ... I can understand the way nature works and I can accept that although we are scared about sea level rise, we are going to vanish, but, nature is working as well. We don't really know which is quicker, maybe sea level rise is quicker than the way nature works.

At times, responses to climate change, and particularly sea level rise, were highly emotional. Fear and anticipated suffering play a significant role in responses to climate change articulated by some participants. The following, for example, link suffering to loss of land and loss of governance:

P24: Here in Tuvalu, because we are small, it will be so hard for us because we are low lying islands so if sea level is rising we will suffer very much because the sea will be taking our land so we don't have a place to live. We don't have land to build now. We don't have any place to live. So we lose all our property. We don't have a government, we don't have everything, economy. We will be stranded.

P21: I don't want to leave my country. Because this is a sovereign state, we have sovereignty, and we want to maintain that. We also don't want to burden other

countries with us, to relocate us to other countries, to burden them because we have our own culture and we want to maintain that. I will be very sad and I am sure that I think I will be, if the worst comes to the worst, I think I would rather just stay here and die. I don't want to leave my country.

One participant expressed optimism, asserting that the Tuvalu islands would be protected from sea level rise by physical fortification:

P10: There will be things to protect the country, for example, sea walls. Other developments will also be important. At the moment, there is already a bit of change [in the physical environment]. There was a workshop with TANGO where the issue of sea-walls was raised. There is an issue with the funding of the sea-walls. It will come from overseas. The Government of Tuvalu and TANGO will convince overseas governments to fund the sea walls.

Islographs of empowerment

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that there are prominent characteristics of islographs among Tuvalu's inhabitants. Islographs among participants in this study emphasise strength and uniqueness of Tuvaluan culture, co-existing with rights and responsibilities of environmental and social care common to all inhabitants of Earth. These islographs, I argue, are empowering ones that are being marginalised by the more visible and ubiquitous representations of Tuvalu in environmentalist and journalist discourses. Environmentalist and journalist discourses are, importantly, largely recorded and easily accessible to anyone with written English language skills and Internet access. In Tuvalu, where such tools are far from

universally available and cultural expression is largely oral and therefore unrecorded, empowering islographs are far less likely to be widely circulated.

During interviews, I posed the question ‘Imagine I am someone who has never heard of Tuvalu. What are the most important things you think I should know about this place?’ In response, several participants emphasised the uniqueness and importance of Tuvaluan culture, articulated in different ways. For one participant, cultural strength is embodied in the community spirit of the *fenua*:

P17: I think you should know the people and its culture. The way of life in Tuvalu. Of course the most important, one of the important things that I miss especially when I travel around the world is the pace of life in Tuvalu. Which is quite unique compared to all other countries I believe. The other thing that keeps Tuvalu developing and prospering is unity. That is of course of the communal spirit. “Islandism”. It can be named “islandism” or communal. They are a very communal based people. And they like doing all these sort of things. Like when a chief is asking for something from the people, they will give their wholehearted support. I think this is the culture that keeps us going.

Clearly, the island is central to the spirit of community for this participant. For him, to be part of an island community is about occupying and valuing a moral and cultural space as much as it is a territorial one. Another participant expressed similar ideas, stressing that Tuvaluan culture is unique:

P15: The most important thing you should know about Tuvalu is its culture. First of all it’s culture it’s very unique. You won’t find it anywhere else in Pacific. The other thing that you should know about Tuvalu is that it consists of eight islands, all atoll

islands, very flat, as flat as this table you are writing on. No mountains, no valleys, no hills to climb ... We are unique, as Tuvaluans we are proud of our culture ... And the unique thing about our culture is that we are a very small people; less than 10,000 people. And it's a culture that is based on an extended family system. We look after a lot of people. The community sort of looks after itself. We share things between us. Any surplus or excess is shared around. If one day I don't have something I go and ask my neighbour or my cousin or my uncle. That's one unique aspect of our culture.

Several participant responses to the future threats of climate change included concern over changes to Tuvaluan identities and culture. Migration away from the Tuvalu islands is perceived to contribute to loss of Tuvaluan identity, and the islands are represented as cultural as well as territorial space:

P9: Though we say we are going under water and people are looking to go somewhere else, there's no better place than home. The main reason is you know your way at home. And then you are yourself. Your identity is there.

P19: There is no other place like Tuvalu. If Australia or New Zealand want us to move down there, I think there is no such place as Tuvalu you know, if we go there, as refugees. I think Tuvalu is the best place for Tuvaluan people.

P11: Relocation of the people due to the problem of sea level rise does not remove the existence of Tuvaluans from the face of the Earth but it removes their identity as Tuvaluans. And their identity as Tuvaluans has its core in its culture. Take for instance we Tuvaluans cannot create another country within another country, for example, we cannot take all Tuvaluans and create another Tuvalu in Australia. If we are relocated to Australia, they have to become Australians in tradition, ways of life, education and everything. Their culture will die with this land. So when we say that

the impact of sea level rise in Tuvalu is diminishing of this race it does not mean that Tuvaluans won't exist. No, it's the identity, the unique identity as a people among peoples in the world.

The threat was perceived by some as a threat to the identity of future generations of Tuvaluans:

P6: Every moment I treasure because I know that my great great grand daughter will not be able to live through what I am living through, not be able to enjoy life in Tuvalu as I am enjoying it. Maybe she ... will be hearing lots about Tuvalu, but seeing what it is like, getting a real feel for who he or she is as a Tuvaluan, she wouldn't have that opportunity. And it's an identity being robbed from her.

P15: How will our children cope with living in Australia say for instance? Or living in New Zealand? How will they adapt? Will they still retain their Tuvaluan identities, or will the pressure from other communities that they are living with force them to abandon and adapt more to the environment that they are living in? ... It's going to be like ... the movie "Day After Tomorrow". You have to see that movie because I think that's exactly what's going to happen in 2050 ... I doubt anyone will be here. If Tuvalu is not completely submerged by sea-water the other combined effects of climate change - drought, coral bleaching, water-borne diseases ... I hope I am not around. But that's why we have to advocate, because basically as human beings we live for our children. What we do now we want to pass on to our children. We want to ensure that they have a good life. We invest our money in our kids, send them to school so that they have a good future. We prepare them for the future. So we would like our kids to remain here.

From these responses, it is evident that any future disappearance of the Tuvaluan islands is perceived not in terms directly of loss of land or property,

but in terms of the loss of identity and cultural space. In the words of the following participant, cultural strength is valued more highly than economic opportunity or gain, and needs to be fostered:

P6: Our culture is beautiful. Because it has that element of caring and sharing that allows everybody to be well taken care of. And that's something to me very important, *and needs to be promoted* ... you look at the people living here, why do they keep staying here? Because you look at everything else, we do not have good soil to plant, we don't have enough land to develop, and we do not have any of those mineral resources. And yet people stay, people keep on staying. And I think it's because of the simplicity of the lifestyle we have and compared to overseas ... I mean you have the sunshine all throughout the year and to me though we are small and though we are poor we are happy. We are satisfied, we are comfortable. *We just want things the way they are.*

However, the following participants envisaged a changing culture that is linked in complex and differing ways to climate change and urbanisation, to internal and international migration, signifying a changing and complex cultural space of which the islands are one part:

F4: it would take time to completely come to a point where Tuvaluan will completely phase out culture. Even if we migrate, I do not feel comfortable with the word 'loss of culture'. Today in New Zealand, despite a fair community in New Zealand, a Tuvaluan community, they do maintain their identity as Tuvaluans, and that means they practice their culture, even though they have left Tuvalu for better opportunities. But they maintain the community, they meet quite frequently, they play certain Tuvaluan games, they get together and they dance.

F3: We could lose our culture by just remaining where we are. Given time, we could lose it, either totally or we could change it. But it's a very interesting question in that light because culture is an evolving thing. It is changing. So wherever we go or wherever we stay, culture is still evolving and changing. The ways in which it is changing of course is subject to many factors. But I think ... like anybody else, we have been moving in history. Tuvaluans have been moving from place to place all the time. We have moved from island to island and now the danger is urbanisation. I think the whole issue we are talking about is not so much Tuvalu being submerged as indicated by king tide, but the danger comes from our urbanisation. Moving either into the capital or into a place which offers better opportunities

In addition to the foregoing islographs that emphasise the value and uniqueness of Tuvaluan culture, several participants articulated their climate change concerns as an issue connecting them to humanity as a whole. There is an apparent paradox between the uniqueness of Tuvaluan culture emphasised in many of the foregoing interview extracts, and the following statement, which emphasises commonality in the world's population:

P19: I want people to know that *we are living the same as themselves*, but we are facing the impact you know of climate change.

For the following participant, however, there is also paradox in perceptions of Tuvalu as unique and yet simultaneously a part of a global community of human beings: Tuvalu is a unique cultural space *embedded* in a shared, common global space of humanity: Tuvaluans have the right to assert their identity and practice their culture as Tuvaluans in their island space as well as to insist on the rights enjoyed by other members of the global community, and

it is the responsibility of all members of the global community to respect these rights:

P6: Our survival depends very much on the collaborations of our island nations. And also on the big countries and how willing they are to respect us as human beings ... I think as a Tuvaluan I would like Tuvalu to remain as it is. I would like people to keep looking at Tuvalu as a country, that deserves to be named as a country. To consider Tuvalu as a place where there are human beings living in the place, and they deserve their right to their own identity and to live in their own place. And also to respect as they respect their fellow countrymen. After all we all belong to one humankind family. We are all human beings that deserve to be respected. And to live in peace and enjoy your freedoms in your own home.

For the same participant, the prospect of forced migration coupled with the designation 'environmental refugee' denies her the right to a fully equal identity as a member of the global community and her rights to be in her own space in the world:

P6: It is sad for me to think of that future. And we wouldn't like to eventually get forced out of our place and be classed as environmental refugees. That has a negative attachment to it. It's like considering ourselves like second class citizens in the future. It devalues your feelings as a human being. It makes you feel small and negative about yourself. And it doesn't make you fully human. And the question is, who has the right to deny myself the joy of feeling human, of feeling fully human? Because we are born equal and we should be treated equally.

For one participant, future change to Tuvaluan culture and identity is very difficult to estimate:

P15: [When] sea water has risen up to a level to make it unbearable for life. A combination of other effects and sea level rise, then the only option that we have is that people will have to move somewhere. And when we have to move we are talking about relocating an entire culture, an entire society, and starting from scratch somewhere new. What's worrying here is that if you move an entire culture, how do you put a value on that? How do you value a culture? What's the monetary value? What aspects of the culture will be lost? By moving to a new country, you are assimilating to that new society, and in the process, because you are now in a strange land, a foreign land, you will lose a lot of aspects of your culture in the new place ... We feel that we should do everything that we can within the means and resources available to us. To protect the uniqueness of our culture. Our culture is our identity. As Tuvaluans if we lose our culture, we are no longer Tuvaluans.

His perception of Tuvaluan culture and identity as effectively priceless contrasts markedly with the following extract, in which an outsider places a low value on the desires of islanders to remain on island, in the context of climate change. Cultural practices and identity are devalued in the quest to pursue fossil fuel consumption practices elsewhere:

Dr Fisher, the executive director of the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE), has suggested that *an evacuation of small island states might be more efficient than forcing industrialised countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions* (Edwards 1999, 318, emphasis added).

In some of the narratives of loss of identity and Tuvaluan culture that I have related, there is a clear resistance by participants to their islands being represented as expendable space at a global scale. Such articulations of

resistance are important islographs, a point that is also argued by Edwards in response to the cost-benefit statement on island evacuation made by Fisher:

Suggestions like [Dr Fisher's] should be rejected. Fisher is using cost-benefit analysis to decide the fate of Pacific Islanders; he is clearly placing a lower value on the lives and cultures of the inhabitants of low-lying atoll states than he is placing on the economies of industrialised countries. It is particularly worrying that people who have some influence on the greenhouse policies adopted in the industrialised nations are making such statements in public forums. More consideration has to be given to the people who are ignored in the industrialised world's vision of 'progress' (Edwards 1999, 318).

Following Edwards' suggestion, how can more consideration be given to the 'ignored' islanders? If Tuvaluans are articulating strong concerns over the continuation of their culture and their identity, how can such concerns be given practical effect in policy in Tuvalu? During interviews, I asked participants to reflect on whether Tuvaluans felt empowered to do anything about climate change. For one participant, there was a sense of hopelessness:

P22: I don't think [anything can be done]. It's nature's job and nobody can ever reverse that. Although it's on everybody's mind. I wish, I wish, I wish I can do that but nothing can be done. We just have to wait and see the wrath of nature when it comes to us.

For another participant, increased awareness about climate change among Tuvalu's citizens would advance empowerment:

P8: In Tuvalu they are not empowered, they don't have any power to face climate change ... They are more dependent on assistance rather than themselves doing it ... It's something we can change because if people don't act, maybe they don't understand ... If you don't see it's a problem you don't do something about it. If you don't do it that means you don't understand. So with climate change we can see that the understanding at the community level of the climate change issue is really low. So we have developed an awareness booklet in the local language trying to increase the understanding of the people.

Similarly, the following participant believes that education in a broad sense is the key to empowering inhabitants to cope with climate change. In particular, education is seen as important in facing any future migration event with skills and confidence rather than as disempowered and uneducated:

P6: the only way we can empower ourselves, make us confident and feel positive about us as Tuvaluans is to educate ourselves. And I think that is the only weapon we have to empower ourselves. What can you do to your environment to empower yourself? I mean, it takes money to reclaim land and it doesn't cost just a few hundred dollars, it would cost millions of dollars to do that. And how long would that stay, given the change in climate? And sea level rising, who will want to invest in something that is going to be destroyed, or submerged in the next twenty or thirty years? So for us, you know people in Tuvalu talk about it and they tell each other, educate your children. That's the only thing we can do. Don't rely on anybody, just educate your children. Make use of whatever educational opportunity we are getting at the moment, to learn as much as we can, so when worse comes to worse, and we get relocated we know we will be able to get better jobs instead of doing labour, those kind of labour jobs. It's sad hey?

For another participant, Tuvalu as a showcase of sustainability is a possible mechanism for addressing climate change. His rationale is that by becoming *model* citizens of the global community, climate change impacts are more likely to attract compassion and be addressed by the global community:

P19: There is lots of work to be done, so that people can feel like they can do some work themselves. What I believe is that what Tuvaluans do to contribute to climate change is very very small. But I think we have to live by example, don't need the car, reduce emissions ... but some say that we are very small so no matter what we are doing, we don't contribute much compared to the big countries ... It is a strong political message we are sending to the big islands, apart from the Kyoto Protocol. That's what I mean, live by example, you know. The Government is looking on renewable energy by using biofuel - I think it's a very good opportunity to show the world we are leading by example. We are suffering. We are the ones who are facing it.

For other participants, it was the articulation of climate change concerns internationally that was not only the most useful way of effecting change but also the only practical option given Tuvalu's lack of resources and small economy:

P16: I think the Church and the Government are really working hard on those things [by] bringing our grievances to the world.

P10: The people have their voices. It is the only power we can exercise. There is for an example a Tuvaluan representative in New York.

One participant expressed a desire to see issues of Tuvaluan rights to identity and sovereignty be voiced by Tuvaluan representatives in international fora:

P17: The policy of ours, our focus, is to continue making noises all over the world. We want to be in the front line you know. Not only us but countries with similar problems ... on climate change we will continue to lobby. Make our voices heard. If the predictions come true, in the year 2050, and Tuvalu is going to disappear then it's very important for us because we are talking here not only the life of the people but for a state to disappear. So that it is our identity and our sovereignty you know. To us it's eating into the hearts of the Tuvaluan people themselves. Because if we consider opting for resettlement, that is very different to when you live on your own home, the true home.

Another participant emphasised two issues to be voiced: the importance of a humanitarian discourse and an emphasis on Tuvalu as small and weak, embodied in an institutional image of a 'least developed country':

P21: I think if we really raise our concern regarding Tuvalu as a Least Developed Country or as a Small Island State and the life of the people is more important. And I think if we raise our concern, and we've got others supporting or justify ourselves, I'm sure we are going to, I'm sure, those ... bigger countries will think more sympathy for us. That we are human beings like themselves. We also need life, we want to live like themselves too ... I would really like them to really strengthen humanitarian policy internationally. And to look more sympathetic to a small country like Tuvalu. And also to consider our needs and our ... that we also want to live in this world ... I think it's just a matter of the international community to be more realistic and really look at us as human beings too, like themselves.

The same participant links humanitarian discourse with anticipated sympathy for Tuvaluans as the poor and weak:

P21: [I want] these countries like America and Australia to be more like sympathetic with the people of Tuvalu. And not only Tuvaluans, but also to other small island countries. Because we are so vulnerable we don't have other places to go and we are very small and I think to be more ... more on our side. Look at them, already they are economically developed and maybe that's why they are not looking at us. They are not looking at us as human beings, they are more prefer to develop the country economically. But just to think that ... to put themselves into our position, and I'm sure they are going to help us. They will have sympathy with us. I know they've got lots and lots of money from what they are doing, but this, just money, I know it's money but life is more important than money.

Another participant also expressed anticipated sympathy arising from the promotion of Tuvalu as disappearing islands:

P17: My feeling is I believe they [outsiders who come here interested in climate change] are genuine with their own mission. Like yours. They try to promote and help Tuvalu on climate change issue ... Because it is my belief that we all don't want to see small places like Tuvalu and any other small places, disappearing because of this global issues, problem. Because of that we must welcome people, media people ... Because we need these people to go out to the world and promote hopefully the good side of it.

However, such sympathy has not been forthcoming, which may be explained by remembering the voyeuristic side of the compassion/voyeurism paradox discussed in detail in Chapter Five. McNamara (2006) has documented a distinct lack of attention to formulating policy on environmental refugees at

the United Nations. No provisions for redress for a future migration event have been negotiated in international climate change fora, and no large-scale adaptation projects for Tuvalu (such as physical fortification of the islands) have commenced. 'Environmental refugee' remains officially a contested term. Not enshrined in international law, it carries connotations of victimhood without any of the legal protections afforded to political refugees. Global carbon emissions continue apace, and Tuvalu is being represented as a site of climate change tourism.

An example demonstrates this point. At the WWF workshop mentioned earlier, Tuvalu's then United Nations Ambassador Enele Sopoaga made free use of the emotive language of weak and disempowered refugees. He stated that Tuvaluans are 'refugees already because our land is being eroded' and went on to ask 'can we really allow ourselves to be refugees? Can we find another Tuvalu elsewhere?' The next day, the same speaker quoted another Tuvaluan statesperson, Sir Toripi Lauti, at the meeting where the Kyoto Protocol was negotiated in 1997: 'Unless urgent actions are taken against climate change, in 50 years time the world would just come and collect our bodies in the sea'.

Sopoaga reported that this image really moved the conference attendants. Yet, ten years later, little has been practically achieved in the way of international policy action on climate change for islands. I asked a young Tuvaluan student friend of mine who was attending the WWF workshop and sitting beside me of his impressions of Ambassador Sopoaga's words. He said that he felt the Ambassador's focus was highly negative, that it was all doom and gloom, and

that he would rather the tone of such speeches be more positive. He expressed a need of some hope.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have examined negotiations of islographs among Tuvalu's educated elite - politicians, bureaucrats, community elders, students and pastors. Attempts are being made to reclaim Tuvalu as inherently valuable space, with humanitarian linkages with the rest of the world. Interview participants link Tuvalu to the rest of Earth not as a microcosm of it but embodied in common rights and responsibilities of humanity. Such a mobilisation of an island paradox simultaneously demotes the designation of Tuvalu islands as weak and vulnerable and emphasises the value and uniqueness of Tuvaluan culture and the rights and responsibilities to promote such uniqueness among small cultural groups common to all inhabitants of Earth.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

This work has been concerned with island representations. Founded on the premise that island meanings are subject to ongoing contestation, the aim has been to examine representations of islands in climate change discourses. Specifically, I have analysed how Tuvalu is taking on new meanings as people around the world attempt to come to terms with climate change.

I have posited that there are necessary but insufficient debates over the physicality of rising sea levels, and concern about what effects these and other climate change impacts may have on health, infrastructure, trade and ecology. Consequently, I have hypothesised that there are important *representational*, as well as physical and experiential, thresholds at stake for Tuvalu's inhabitants. Addressing a lack of research interrogating representations of islands in climate change discourses, I introduced an analytical tool named 'the islograph' to chart Tuvalu's changing meanings in this context. This term encapsulates a methodological approach which serves to emphasise the utility of paying attention to representations in the interdisciplinary field of island studies.

In this final chapter I synthesise the major findings of this dissertation and restate my chief arguments. The first of these is that islographs of Tuvalu play

an important role in climate change power relations. The second and consequential argument is that representational issues are important for island communities: in Tuvalu and elsewhere, in the context of climate change and perhaps beyond, in island studies and critical geography, in policy-making and politics, environmentalism and journalism.

Summary of aims and objectives

This research has been operationalised in terms of six objectives. The first objective was to introduce the concept of the islograph, this work's central analytical framework. I defined islographs as shared, non-static imaginings of islands mediated through words, images and symbols. An islograph is a tool, its handiwork evident in configurations of island representations.

The second objective was to describe ethical obligations that inform identifying, selecting, and accessing representations of Tuvalu. Drawing upon literature on self-reflexivity in qualitative research, I argued that engagement with islographs is a practice necessarily situated and partial. These labours are informed and complicated by my shifting positioning in relation to the constitutive outside of the islands I selected for analysis.

The third objective was to describe and review scholarly critiques of island representations by undertaking a review of a range of works drawn from island studies. I described three different scholarly islographs. The first is the *fixed islograph*, in which islands are represented as objects in the landscape inscribed with innate meaning and possessing natural boundaries. Islanders

are represented as possessing unique island identities and valid island knowledge is derived from the realm of the real. The second is the *fluid islograph*, in which islands are represented as knowable through power relations. They are understood as political tools, complex spaces with changing, contestable meanings. The third is the *fascination islograph*, in which islands are deployed emotionally and at times uncritically, often by outsiders, in research agendas and practices. Two key characteristics of Western islographs were also drawn out. First, islands are paradoxical spaces and second, islands are imaginative geographies, mechanisms of relational identity construction that paradoxically function as mirrors of the self and a means of identity construction in relation to distant and different others.

The fourth objective was to provide an overview of key points in the history of Tuvalu. By reviewing literature on these islands, I contextualised analysis of Tuvalu's islographs in climate change discourses. This knowledge is useful for understanding how and with what effects Tuvalu has emerged from relative obscurity in viewpoints from the West, to being widely understood as the 'disappearing islands' of climate change.

The fifth objective was to describe and analyse Tuvalu's islographs in climate change discourses, many of which are produced by Westerners. I considered whether and how its islands are paradoxical spaces and imaginative geographies. By analysing a selection of representations of Tuvalu produced by a range of individuals and groups who claim a stake in Tuvalu as climate change space, I demonstrated that Tuvalu's environmentalist and journalist

islographs are structured by a paradox, one constituting the islands as space separate from and yet simultaneously embedded in trajectories of environmental change. Such a paradox is embodied in recurring images of Tuvalu as valuable yet expendable - the 'canary in the coalmine' of climate change for Earth.

The sixth objective was to examine how environmentalist and journalist islographs of Tuvalu, mostly produced by non-inhabitants, have been negotiated by its inhabitants. I asked what islographs are being articulated in response to representations of Tuvalu as, a global litmus test, a sustainability showcase and an expendable space. I documented how attempts are being made by inhabitants to reclaim Tuvalu as inherently valuable space.

Empowering islographs among Tuvalu's elite who are engaged in climate change discourses link Tuvalu to the rest of planet Earth not in service to it as a litmus test, but connected to and embedded in common rights and responsibilities of humanity.

Concluding synthesis

Island representations can, and indeed should, be understood as contested and changing. Island meanings are not innate; they are fluid political tools rather than stable concepts embedded in landscape. The concept of the islograph is useful for interrogating changing island meanings and their implication in power relations. In a range of representations, Tuvalu has become a site where climate change issues are being negotiated and constituted in part by how

people make sense of 'disappearing islands'. Representations of Tuvalu as the 'canary in the coalmine' of climate change can be understood as attempts to exert control over island meanings and consequently, as efforts to map the Tuvaluan community's destiny. Although participants in environmentalist and journalism discourses have conflicting views on whether or not Tuvalu is disappearing, common elements to the islographs they produce stabilise and normalise particular meanings of Tuvalu as paradoxical space, on which to inscribe outsider climate change fears and desires. On the one hand, Tuvalu is viewed as a site of compassion and environmentalist action in response to climate change. On the other hand, it is a site of climate change voyeurism for Western tourists and 'wishful sinking', in the discourses of Al Gore and some other Western environmentalists who turn their attention towards Tuvalu. Deploying a paradoxical version of what Howitt and Stevens (2005, 35) call 'a romantic idealising of the 'indigenous Other' as a source of some alternative universal truth', elements of a fascination islograph are discernable: Tuvaluan inhabitants seem simultaneously to occupy islands as a showcase of sustainability and as a sacrificial lamb to the onward sweep of modernity. These representations are not unproblematic 'truths'. Following Said (1978), Western representations of Tuvalu as 'disappearing islands' are constitutive of an unequal relationship, projecting Tuvalu in terms of Western fears and desires. Representations of Tuvalu are produced in the pursuit of outside interests, to save Earth or to create newsworthy accounts of the 'disappearing islands' in terms of victimhood and voyeurism. Furthermore, there is no direct link between sinking islands and compassion. Rather, when the disappearing islands are understood as paradoxical space, they become

simultaneously linked to competing forces of compassion and voyeurism. These are the more visible and ubiquitous representations of Tuvalu in environmentalist and journalist discourses. Largely recorded and easily accessible to anyone with written English language skills and Internet access, they are in medium as well as message ways in which more empowering islographs among Tuvalu's largely oral discursive culture are being subdued.

Although climate and weather patterns have long been of interest to agricultural, sea-faring, and island societies, their changes are difficult for lay people to grasp. The impacts of climate change are more often exacerbations of existing conditions such as drought and occurrence of cyclones. Tuvalu's 'disappearing islands' seem to offer a graspable, finite space in which to observe discrete impacts of climate change. In climate change discourses Tuvalu's identity is being reshaped. In environmentalist and journalist islographs, Tuvalu is represented as a finite, bounded, Euclidean space in which are discernable some of the characteristics of the fixed islograph. The apparent finitude of the 'disappearing islands' seems to allow a comforting graspability when grappling with climate and carbon cycles as complex, non-Euclidean systems. Tuvalu is imagined to be a space where making sense of impacts of climate change can seemingly be transformed into a non-complex manageability. Most problematically, Tuvalu is being made meaningful to Western and post-industrial societies as finite, expendable space, mobilised as such because it is seen as a useful sign that climate change is real and serious for the planet as a whole. Focus on Tuvalu as 'the canary in the coalmine of global climate change' bolsters Western and post-industrial anxieties about

climate change glossed as 'global'. The island as paradoxical space is not necessarily strategically or explicitly produced. As Appadurai (1988, 40) has observed, 'ideas and images not only travel from place to place ... they periodically come into compelling configurations, configurations which, once formed, resist modification or critique.' But if Tuvalu is, at least partly, imagined space, it can be *re-imagined*. Participants in climate change discourses have a choice of ways to represent islands, although such choices can appear to be constrained by established Western islographic 'truths'.

Islographs raise important ethical issues for scholars. While it is not my intention to discount the importance and usefulness of the island field-site, there are ethical obligations for researchers in choosing such field-sites, particularly because of widespread island fascination that exists but is rarely problematised among scholars. In this work I have attempted to add representational richness to the 'disappearing islands' debate centred on Tuvalu, without losing sight of my necessarily partial and subjective positioning as an Australian, a citizen of the post-industrial world. I thus offer a concluding argument for advancing self-reflexive monitoring of island representations in research. Perhaps researchers are - problematically - fascinated by islands because they help to reinforce and value autonomous senses of self and needs for boundaries separating self from Other:

'Islands and beaches' is a metaphor for the different ways in which human beings construct their worlds and for the boundaries they construct between them ... But the islands and beaches I speak of are less physical than cultural. They are the islands men and women make by the reality they attribute to their categories, their roles,

their institutions, and the beaches they put around them with their definitions of 'we' and 'they' ... the remaking of those sorts of islands and the crossing of those sorts of beaches can be cruelly painful (Denning 1980, 3).

Scholars could thus fruitfully ask: in selecting island as field sites, do we implicate ourselves in the continued conceptual colonisation of island space? What purposes does island fascination serve? How might productions of island space in research rebound upon islands and islanders? How does island scholarship itself contribute to travels of, and transformations in, island representations conceptually, as well as those relating to island field-sites specifically?

Problematic representations of Tuvalu in environmentalist and journalist discourses, as a 'litmus test of the planet', resonate closely with ways in which scholars sometimes imagine island field-sites to be 'natural laboratories'. The idea that atolls are climate change litmus tests for the planet is found in scholarly reports:

Climate change puts the long-term sustainability of societies in atoll nations at risk. The potential abandonment of sovereign atoll countries *can be used as the benchmark* of the 'dangerous' change that the UNFCCC seeks to avoid (Barnett and Adger 2003, 333, emphasis added).

This quotation was put in a special box in one volume of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report (Mimura et al. 2007, 707). Although clearly well-intentioned, such a perspective can reproduce understandings of islands such

as Tuvalu as expendable space in service to Earth. In describing the scholarly fascination isograph, characterised by a commitment to representing islands as 'natural laboratories', I have suggested that island researchers place desires for knowable bounded worlds in their island field-sites. The island natural laboratory has become a way of rendering the complexities of the larger world apparently more understandable. Islands have become a mirror of the scientist's laboratory, enabling and confirming scholarly imperatives to categorise and make sense of the world in small, bounded, discrete and separate portions. Understanding islands in terms of a laboratory, the inhabitant community can become of interest not only in and of itself, but for its utility as a microcosm, for generating knowledge of and for the wider world. Furthermore, island laboratories enable identities of researchers of islands to be akin to that of a curious scientist in a laboratory, detachedly generating what is assumed to be objective but also beneficial and relevant knowledge. This self-image is comforting and benign for researchers, dependent on a persistent myth that positivist research methodologies - those most commonly associated with scientists in laboratories - are ideologically neutral: 'by measuring - and thus mastering - this microcosmic island, [new discoverers] are engaging vicariously in the control of the macrocosm Earth' (Péron 2004, 331).

According to this myth, researchers operate externally from political arenas. In a laboratory, a researcher is imagined to be able to detach a neutral observer self from an emotional self. As such, it seems that island fascinations are expected to operate as an unproblematic, detachable experience from

research agendas and practices. However, if drawn to the island emotionally, and if inhabiting an 'island laboratory' researchers must resist representing themselves as necessarily neutral agents of observation and regulation. A sense of island fascination needs to be explicated, the island 'laboratory' recognised as a culturally and historically produced field-site. At a time when research on the physical, lived experience and representational aspects of islands in the context of climate change is needed, it is paramount that researchers do not unwittingly reproduce Tuvalu, and other islands, as expendable natural laboratories in their work.

Since academic selves are not necessarily detachable from emotional selves, there are also more personal elements to island space in research agendas, practices and outcomes. The fixed islographic island offers an illusion of solidity, embodying a comforting, stable world of knowledge while other formerly apparently stable boundaries of knowledge are continually, and at times unpredictably, shifting. In this context, island fascination can provide an appealing imaginative geography: a means of identity construction in relation to islands that are apparently distant and different from continental or mainland sites. Islands become endlessly fascinating as they seem to offer reinforcement of a vision of the world, and perhaps also of selves, of research work and other people: parcelled off into discrete, bounded, understandable portions:

Identity has become concomitantly a conceptual tool for grasping how globalisation reinforces cultural differentiation ... identity refers both to people's attempts to mark boundaries in the ongoing flux of globalisation processes and to the nostalgia of

social scientists for the time when it seemed possible to isolate bounded social formations (Paasi 2002, 137).

Island fascination may thus stem from a need for a beacon of stability in a disorienting world. Tuan (1995) suggests that one of the ways in which 'islands' specifically have impact upon academic lives is via the act of critical investigation itself, which unpacks comforting cultural devices to 'expose individual isolation and the world's ultimate indifference'. He paints academic career progression as the building of an island self. As knowledge advances and expertise accumulates, one's career culminates in the island of specialist knowledge, inhabited by a single researcher. As Lowenthal (2007, 202) has argued, 'islands really own us, for in seeking them we are more often than not in search of ourselves'. Researchers, as well as those who represent Tuvalu and other islands in other contexts, would do well to consider their island selves as they seek to understand and represent islands and islanders.

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Appendix 1

Interview Template

How would you describe your professional role?

What are your main professional responsibilities?

How long have you been involved in this professional role?

Can you tell me what you consider to be the most important things about Tuvalu?

Can you imagine what Tuvalu will be like in fifteen year's time (2020)?

Can you imagine what Tuvalu will be like in forty-five year's time (2050)?

How do you think people who are not from Tuvalu see Tuvalu?

How would you like people to see Tuvalu?

Tell me what you understand by the term vulnerability?

Do you think Tuvalu is a vulnerable place? If so, to what forces is Tuvalu vulnerable?

Tuvalu has been represented as a vulnerable place. Do you have an opinion on how Tuvalu and vulnerability came to be associated?

Do you think vulnerability is a positive or negative term for Tuvalu to be associated with?

What do you consider to be the most significant factors contributing to climate change?

Do you consider climate change to be an important concern for Tuvalu?

Where do you get your information about the effects of climate change on Tuvalu?

In your assessment do Tuvaluans feel empowered to do anything about climate change?

Are there any more comments you would like to make on the issues we have been discussing?

Appendix 2

Information Sheet



Dr Elaine Stratford
School of Geography and Environmental Studies
University of Tasmania
Private Bag 78
Hobart, Tasmania, 7001
Australia
Tel: +61 3 6226 2462
Fax: +61 3 6226 2989
Email: Elaine.Stratford@utas.edu.au

24th July 2005

Information Sheet

Tuvalu, climate change and the geographic imagination

Dear _____,

We would like to invite your participation in a research project being undertaken at the University of Tasmania, Australia. The name of the investigation is *Tuvalu, climate change and the geographic imagination*. The purpose of the study is to investigate the meanings of climate change from a spatial perspective in order to contribute to a better understanding of how people are adjusting to climate change challenges. The specific aim of the study is to investigate how a variety of actors represent the atoll space in attempts to stake a claim in the evolving production of atolls as spaces of climate change. This aim will be achieved by analysing representations of Tuvalu and its climate change imperatives in media, research, popular and governance discourses, both internal and external to Tuvalu. We have invited you to participate on the basis of your professional role and your knowledge of sustainability imperatives faced by Tuvalu.

Your participation will involve an interview of approximately one hour duration, covering your perceptions of climate change in Tuvalu and your knowledge of the challenges faced by Tuvalu in a sustainability context. The interview will be either audio-recorded or conducted via electronic communication. Extensive field notes of the interview will be made afterwards in the case of audio recordings. The field notes or the electronic transcript will be available to you for verification and/or modification before

being included in analysis. Your participation will benefit understanding of social imperatives associated with climate change in Tuvalu.

Please be aware that you will not be named in the publications associated with the study, and that attempts will be made to conceal your identity by securely storing the interview audio tapes and field notes in locked cabinets and secure computer servers at the University of Tasmania and in the home office of Carol Farbotko. The data will be kept securely for a minimum of five years from the date of publication (2007) as required by the University of Tasmania, after which it will be destroyed securely by authorised personnel or the investigators, or kept in the same secure conditions.

However, your professional position may mean that your identity is revealed through details of your professional activities. Please consider these confidentiality issues carefully before you decide to participate in this research. In addition, before publication you may decide to withdraw from participation at any time without explanation and withdraw any interview data you have supplied.

The Chief Investigator in this project is Dr Elaine Stratford, who can be contacted at the above address if you have any questions or concerns. This project is being undertaken to fulfil the requirements for the completion of a PhD by candidate Carol Farbotko in the discipline of Geography and Environmental Studies. The interviewer in this project is Carol Farbotko, who can be contacted at the following address:

Carol Farbotko
26 Barnes Rd
Llandilo, New South Wales, 2747
Australia
Tel: +61 402328722
Email: carolf0@utas.edu.au

You will be given the opportunity to be kept informed of the results of the study. The research project has received ethical approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network of the University of Tasmania, Australia. If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or complaints about the way in which this research is conducted, please feel free to contact:

Ms Amanda Mcaully
Executive Officer, HREC (Tasmania) Network,
Research and Development Office
University of Tasmania
Box 252-01.
Hobart, Tasmania, 7001
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Tel: +61 3 6226 2763
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Please keep this Information Sheet.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Elaine Stratford
Chief Investigator

Carol Farbotko
Investigator